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THE

MYSTERIES

OF

THE BACKWOODS;

OR,

SKETCHES OF THE SOUTHWEST:

INCLUDING

CHARACTER, SCENERY, AND RURAL SPORTS.

BY

T. B. THORPE,

AUTHOR OF

"TOM OWEN THE BEE-HUNTER," &c.

WITH

ILLUSTRATIONS BY FELIX O. C. DARLEY.

PHILADELPHIA:

CAREY AND HART.

1846.

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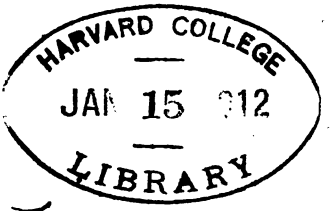

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PREFACE.

The Southwest, with its vast primitive forests, its beautiful prairies, and its magnificent rivers, presents exhibitions of nature before which the pilgrim from every land bows with wonder and awe. The author of this little volume has felt an inspiration among them, which was never called forth by the more merely beautiful and familiar scenery of the North.

Years since he was a stranger among the people inhabiting the Southwest, in pursuit of fortune and health. He found friends, and a hospitality as unbounded as their soil is prolific; and in the pleasant airs of the seasons, to which the rose turns its full-blown and blushing cheek in mid-winter, he found health.

On a certain pleasant fall morning the author fell into the train of a distinguished "bee-hunter." The sport was a novel one, and from its commencement to its consummation it was watched with strange interest, and the record made upon his mind was in time committed to paper. It was sent forth from a retired spot to the busy world, and not expected after many days to return, but rather like a dull moth to see its little hour

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and die. Such, however, was not its destiny. There were those on "both sides of the Atlantic," who adopted it, reprinted it, and praised it; and its parent, always prompted to commit to paper his thoughts of scenes familiar in the backwoods, was emboldened to continue to write at his leisure, having learned that there was an *intrinsic merit in the subjects* associated with the forests which took place of style or manner of composition. The kind wishes of numerous friends can also be urged as a reason for publishing; friends who have, by their kind words, and by more substantial testimonials, shown an interest in the author's welfare.

The "Mysteries of the Backwoods" has one object, which the author would press upon such readers as may honour him with their attention. An effort has been made, in the course of these sketches, to give to those personally unacquainted with the scenery of the Southwest, some idea of the country, of its surface, and vegetation. In these matters the author has endeavoured to be critically correct, indulging in the honest ambition of giving some information, as well as to lighten the lagging moments of a dull hour.

Louisiana, Aug. 1845.

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CONTENTS.

	Page
TRAITS OF THE PRAIRIES	11
A PIANO IN "ARKANSAW"	21
PISCATORY ARCHERY	30
PLACE DE LA CROIX	46
WIT OF THE WOODS	59
THE WATER-CRAFT OF THE BACKWOODS	73
PICTURES OF BUFFALO HUNTING	80
SCENES ON THE MISSISSIPPI	108
THE DISGRACED SCALP-LOCK	118
ALLIGATOR KILLING	137
GRIZZLY BEAR HUNT	145
CONCORDIA LAKE	153
FRONTIER INCIDENT	163
THE MISSISSIPPI	170
AMERICAN WILD-CAT	178
TOM OWEN THE BEE-HUNTER	185

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"She approached the *thick leafed table*, and removed the covering, throwing it carelessly and gracefully aside."—*Page* 28.

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THE

MYSTERIES OF THE BACKWOODS.

TRAITS OF THE PRAIRIES.

We have wandered over the Louisiana prairies, our little pony, like an adventurous bark, seemingly trusting itself imprudently beyond the headlands, a mere speck, moving among the luxuriant islands of live oak that here and there sit so quietly upon the rolling waves of vegetation. Myriads of wild geese would often rise upon our intrusion, helping out the fancy of being at sea; but the bounding deer, or wild cattle, that occasionally resented our presence and rattled off at break-neck pace, kept us firmly on the land. In the spring seasons, the prairies are covered with the choicest flowers, that mix with the young grass in such profusion as to carpet them more delicately, and more richly, than in the seraglio of a sultan. Upon this vegetation innumerable cattle feed and fatten, until they look pampered, and their skins glisten like silk in the sun. Apparently wild as the buffalo, they are all marked and num-

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bered, and in them consist the wealth of the inhabitant of the prairie. It is easy to imagine that herdsmen of such immense fields live a wild and free life; ever on horseback, like the Arabs, they have no fear save when out of the saddle, and nature has kindly provided a "steed" that boasts of no particular blood, that may be called the "yankee" of his kind, because it never tires, never loses its energy, and makes a living and grows fat, where all else of its species would starve.

The mustang pony, the invariable companion of the inhabitant of the prairie, whether he is rich or poor, is a little creature, apparently narrow-chested, and small across the loins. Its head is not finely formed or well set upon a straight neck. There is a want of compactness about the figure, and a looseness about the muscles. The hind legs are long, and form, from the hip to the hoof, a bend as regular as a bow. It is not handsome, but it gives a spring when under the saddle most delightful. The mustang is not subject to the ordinary evils of horseflesh. Sparing in diet, a stranger to grain, easily satisfied, whether on growing or dead grass, it seems to be stubbed and twisted, tough and everlasting, never poor or markedly fat; under all weathers and seasons, it does an amount of work, with ease, that turn all other horses, if they lived through it, into broken down drudges. The eyes of the mustang pony, however, tell you a tale; they are of a witching hazel, of curiously crimson-speckled blue, deep and beautiful as a precious stone, and lighted up by a bit of mischief that betrays the lurking devil within.

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Such is the mustang pony, adapted to the prairie as perfectly as its sunshine and flowers. Their riders cherish the trappings for them that betray old Spain; the saddle with its high pummel and crupper; dangling on either side are the enormous wooden stirrups, looking like a huge pair of mallets; the whole so disproportioned to the horse, that they appear to be an overload of themselves. The bridle envelopes the head as complicatedly as the bandages on a broken arm, crossing and recrossing, filled with side latches and throat latches, and holding a bit that might be mistaken for some ancient machine of torture; attached to which are levers so powerful, that a slight jerk would snap off any thing in the world but the under jaw of a mustang pony. Mounted by a rider that is as much a part of him as his hide, he goes rollicking ahead, with the "eternal lope," such as an amorous deer assumes when it moves beside its half galloping mate, a mixture of two or three gaits, as easy as the motions of a cradle, and in which may be traced some little of the stately tramp of the Moorish Arabian, exhibited centuries since upon the plains of the Alhambra, and pricked by enormous spurs, that rattle with a tingling sound, of which the mustang's sides, so far from resenting the operation, seem to enjoy it as a dulled taste by luxuries requires mustard and cayenne.

The origin of the cattle of the prairies is lost in obscurity; but the wide-spreading horn, the heavy leg, and predominance of black and white, carries the mind back to the times when old Spain sent her colonies, with their rich possessions, under Pizarro

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and Cortez, into the western world. Their ancestors, in the troublesome times of early conquest, breaking away from the restraint of their owners, in course of centuries have multiplied and spread from the Californias to the Gulf of Mexico. The wide savannas, with their elevated boundaries of rich dividing country of two great oceans, warmed by a tropical sun, and cooled by the mountain breeze, and covered by never-failing vegetation, have multiplied the cattle as the sands of the sea. Among the *vacheries* of New Spain, they are killed for their skins alone, their fat carcasses being left a prey to the vulture and the wolf. Those that inhabit the prairies of Attakappas and Opelousas are less wastefully disposed of, as their bodies find a quick sale, to sustain the constantly increasing population that concentrates at the mouth of the great valley of the Mississippi.

In the warm month of June, commences the annual herding of the cattle. At a place fixed upon as the herding ground, a few horsemen will drive together fifty thousand head; and when once grouped together in a solid mass, from a peculiar instinct, a whole troop of cavalry could not again scatter them over the plain. It may readily be imagined that this work is not accomplished without incidents and accidents. In the excitement of the *drive*, horses fall, or run headlong over slow-footed cows, bulls stop to joust, enraged mothers plunge madly with their horns, in pursuit of their calves. A sulky ox refuses to move in the proper direction; off starts a rider, who catching the stubborn animal by the tail,

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it at once becomes frightened into a lope; advantage is taken of the unwieldy body, as it rests upon the fore feet, to jerk it to the ground; before the ox has recovered from its astonishment, a hair rope has been passed through his nose, secured to the mustang pony's tail, and it is led along subdued by pain. A stampede sometimes seizes the herd, and then, with upturned heads and glaring eyes, the animals rush along, making the earth tremble beneath their feet. Then it is that feats of horsemanship are performed that would delight Bedouin Arabs. The *vacher*, armed with an ash stick, some seven feet in length, pointed at the end by a small three-cornered file, scours ahead of the flying cattle, thrusting his rude weapon against their rumps, rolling them over as suddenly on the prairie as if they were shot. Or with a whip, with a handle of a few inches long, and a heavy raw-hide thong of eight feet, will he lash their reeking sides, drawing blood from the flesh as with a knife. Should the drove however move kindly, as they start in the morning so they remain until night, the same plodders in the rear, the same lordly Andalusian in the van. After the cattle have been at the herding ground two or three days, their respective owners separate them and drive them off to brand. Upon the hind quarter is pressed the hot iron that marks ownership and servility. This is known and numbered as the wealth of the stock-raisers of the prairies. The dowry of many a fair bride is in cattle; the announcement of the birth of a son or daughter gives rise to a gift, from some kind uncle or doating aunt, to the new-comer, of per-

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haps a single white heifer. When the little one is grown up, it finds in the sacredly-kept increase a fair start in the world, from which may result a fortune. Through the prairies meander no running streams, yet the cattle have beautiful reservoirs of water to slake their impatient thirst. The ponds of the prairies call forth the admiration, their beauty being even excelled by the simple and perfect contrivance for their formation. The low and marshy spots of the prairie offer to the heated hoofs of the herd a cooling place for their feet; crowded in dense masses upon these places, their continual stepping indents the turf. The rains, attracted by the predisposition to moisture, accumulate in these "standing places," mix with the earth, which is wrought into well tempered clay, and is in this form borne off upon the hoofs of the cattle. As time rolls on, this constant loss displays itself in the incipient basin: deepening by degrees, its bottom finally grows impervious and a pond is made, and thus they are multiplied indefinitely as demanded. Perfectly round and shelving gently to the centre, they soon become skirted with richer and more varied foliage than is elsewhere to be met with. The melumbium rests its huge leaves for a shade upon the surface of the water, and rears its beautiful flowers in the air as an ornament. The smaller water lilies spring up upon the margins of the ponds; even the wild violet is hidden away among the rank grass. Here resort the plover, the wild goose, and duck, and the delicately plumed flamingo, that seems to have stolen from the opening rose-bud its colour. The fruit of

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the melumbium fattens the feathered vagrants, and the clear field that surrounds these choice feeding places protects them from the wiles of the sportsman. In the depths of these ponds, among the tangled roots and grasses, sports the gormandizing trout, the beautiful perch, and soft-shell terrapin, as innocent of snares as if there were no anglers or aldermen in the world.

But the greatest pride of the Louisiana prairie is the live oak. In these beautiful wastes, the little acorn, that vies with the thimble of the fair hand in size, swells into a vast world of itself. It would seem incredible, but from the knowledge of experience, that in so small a germ so much beauty and strength could originate. The little rivulet that gurgles down some gentle declivity, and is obstructed by the rolling stone, or falling limb of the overhanging tree, turning into the proud swelling river, bearing upon its surface the wealth of commerce, and the rage of the driving storm, resembles the oak, that from almost nothing becomes stately in grandeur, and, unaffected, meets the rattling hail of the cannon's mouth, and frowns defiance in the glare of the lightning and the blasts of the hurricane. The live oaks of the Louisiana prairie compare with none but their own kindred which adorn the plains that stretch away towards the tropics. In "merry old England," where the titled of the land, with a reverence that smacks of the superstitions of the Druid priests, look upon their gnarled oaks as their antiquities, and trace back their history with the same pride they do their own exalted race, they would almost fall

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down and worship, could they see these wonders of the new world, that overtop their favourites as the Jura does the Alps.. Among them, there are none touched with age, or promising in youth; they all seem to be rejoicing in their prime, and to stand forth terrible in their strength; yet their waving branches rustle as delicately as the brachen, and the evergreen leaves glisten in the sun, and at a distance from their delicacy appear like silken fringe. Stand beside the mighty trunks!—behold the huge columns of iron gray, how hard they look, and well adapted to sustain the huge forest above them in the air!—the gigantic limbs aspire to reach the horizon!—how they have gracefully bent and bowed in their onward course, and tapered off, almost imperceptibly, to little stems! In those limbs we see the broad swell of the seventy-four, and the ribs for her sides.

What a world is above you in the noble confusion! what a rich mellowed light plays in the vernal shades! The lively squirrel has found a speck in the bark wherein to make its nest; and the delicate twig way yonder, which bears that cluster of leaves, so far in the clouds, hides beneath its quiverings the nest of the little bird that will teach its happy young to try their ambitious wings to fly through the broad world within the body of the tree, resting their tiny pinions by the way, as eagles do, when they soar among the clouds and stoop upon the precipice. Here, when the summer sun radiates from the heated plain, and the dust flies from every step upon the parched soil, come the cattle by thousands to cool their burning sides in the never-failing shade, and, in

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quiet repose, pass the noon of day. Nature, beautiful in her economy, thus erects her sacred temples, for the benefit of her creatures. Centuries before the cattle that now rest so quietly beneath these oaks came to our continent, the wild buffalo took their place, and the wilder Indian was the keeper of the *vacheries*. By whom and when was planted the acorn? How came the magic seed so mysteriously scattered over the vast field? What drew them to the moist places, and buried them beside the water-courses? and in the old times of their youth, who were the dryads to preserve the tender plant from the cud, or heavy crushing foot? Easy indeed is it, in looking upon these wonderful exhibitions of nature, reared up in so lovely places, open ever to the sunshine and the storm, with no shade but from the clouds, no ambitious rivals to retard their growth, to imagine, in their first budding, they were the care of fairy hands, and protected by guardian spirits, until they grew into temples, whose foundations reach deep into the earth, and whose canopy catches the first rays of the morning sun.

Ho! for the prairies! those broad fields in the arcana of nature, where the grasses and ground-flowers revel, and their interlaced roots usurp the soil, broad rolling waves of green earth that glisten in the setting sun, as if they would turn a sparkling ripple from their tops, and then settle down into quite inland seas. Rich wastes, whereon the deer roam as in a boundless park, and where the cattle herd in stately pride swelling their sleek sides with never-failing herbage,—where the horizon plays before

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you in deceptive circles, seeming to sink from your wearied footsteps as you move towards it;—grand trysting-places of magnificent sport, where man and beast, free from the crowded mart or thick-set forest trees, perform their different parts on nature's grandest stage, exulting in freedom.

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A PIANO IN "ARKANSAW."

We shall never forget the excitement which seized upon the inhabitants of the little village of Hardscrabble, as the report spread through the community that a real piano had actually arrived within its precincts. Speculation was afloat as to its appearance and its use. The name was familiar with everybody; but what it precisely meant, no one could tell. That it had legs was certain; for a stray volume of some traveller was one of the most conspicuous works in the floating library of Hardscrabble; and said traveller stated he had seen a piano somewhere in New England with pantalettes on. An old foreign paper was brought forward, in which there was an advertisement headed "Soiree," which informed the "citizens generally," that Mr. Bobolink would preside at the piano.

This was presumed by several wiseacres, who had been to a menagerie, to mean that Mr. Bobolink stirred the piano up with a long pole, in the same way the showman did the lions and rhi-no-ce-rus. So public opinion was in favour of its being an animal, though a harmless one; for there had been a land speculator through the village a few weeks before, who distributed circulars of a "Female Academy," for the accomplishment of young ladies. These circulars distinctly stated "the use of the

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piano to be one dollar per month." One knowing old chap said, if they would tell him what so-i-ree meant, he would tell them what a piano was, and no mistake.

The owner of this strange instrument was no less than a very quiet and very respectable late merchant in a little town somewhere "north," who, having failed at home, had emigrated into the new and hospitable country of Arkansas, for the purpose of bettering his fortune, and escaping the heartless sympathy of his more lucky neighbours, who seemed to consider him an indifferent and degraded man because he had become honestly poor.

The new comers were strangers of course. The house in which they were setting up their furniture, was too little arranged "to admit of calls;" and as the family seemed very little disposed to court society, all prospects of immediately solving the mystery that hung about the piano seemed hopeless. In the mean time public opinion was "rife." The depository of this strange thing was looked upon by the passers-by with indefinable awe; and as noises unfamiliar reached the street, it was presumed that the piano made them, and the excitement rose higher than ever. In the midst of it, one or two old ladies, presuming upon their age and respectability, called upon the strangers and inquired after their health, and offered their services and friendship; meantime every thing in the house was eyed with the greatest intensity, but seeing nothing strange, a hint was given about the piano. One of the new family observed carelessly, "that it had been much

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injured by bringing out, that the damp had affected its tones, and that one of its legs was so injured that it would not stand up, and that for the present it would not ornament the parlour."

Here was an explanation, indeed: injured in bringing out—damp affecting its tones—leg broken. "Poor thing!" ejaculated the old ladies with real sympathy, as they proceeded homeward; "travelling has evidently fatigued it; the Mass-is-sip fogs have given it a cold, poor thing!" and they wished to see it with increased curiosity. "The village" agreed that if Moses Mercer, familiarly called "Mo Mercer," was in town, they would have a description of the piano, and the uses to which it was put; and fortunately, in the midst of the excitement, "Mo" arrived, he having been temporarily absent on a hunting expedition.

Moses Mercer was the only son of "old Mercer," who was, and had been, in the state senate ever since Arkansas was admitted into the "Union." Mo, from this fact, received great glory, of course; his father's greatness alone would have stamped him with superiority; but his having been twice to the "Capitol," when the legislature was in session, stamped his claims to pre-eminence over all competitors; and Mo Mercer was the oracle of the renowned village of Hardscrabble.

"Mo" knew every thing; he had all the consequence and complacency of a man who had never seen his equal, and never expected to. "Mo" bragged extensively upon his having been to the "Capitol" twice,—of his there having been in the

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most "fashionable society,"—of having seen the world. His return to town was received with a shout. The arrival of the piano was announced to him, and *he alone* of all the community was not astonished at the news,

His insensibility was considered wonderful. He treated the piano as a thing he was used to, and went on, among other things to say, that he had seen more pianos in the "Capitol," than he had ever seen woodchucks; and that it was not an animal, but a musical instrument, played upon by the ladies; and he wound up his description by saying that the way "the dear creeters could pull music out of it was a caution to hoarse owls."

The new turn given to the piano excitement in Hardscrabble, by Mo Mercer, was like pouring oil on fire to extinguish it, for it blazed out with more vigour than ever. That it was a musical instrument, made it a rarer thing than if it had been an animal in that wild country, and people of all sizes, colours, and degrees, were dying to see and hear it.

Jim Cash was Mo Mercer's right hand man; in the language of refined society, he was "Mo's toady,"—in the language of Hardscrabble, he was "Mo's wheel-horse." Cash believed in Mo Mercer with an abandonment perfectly ridiculous. Mr. Cash was dying to see the piano, and the first opportunity he had alone with his Quixotte, he expressed the desire that was consuming his vitals.

"We'll go at once and see it," said Mercer.

"Strangers!" echoed the frightened Cash.

"Humbug! Do you think I have visited the

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'Capitol' twice, and don't know how to treat fashionable society? Come along at once, Cash," said Mercer.

Off the pair started, Mercer all confidence, and Cash all fears, as to the propriety of the visit. These fears Cash frankly expressed; but Mercer repeated, for the thousandth time, his experience in the fashionable society of the "Capitol," and with pianos, which he said, "was synonymous." And he finally told Cash, to comfort him, that however abashed and ashamed he might be in the presence of the ladies, "that he needn't fear of sticking, for he would put him through."

A few minutes' walk brought the parties on the broad galleries of the house that contained the object of so much curiosity. The doors and windows were closed, and a suspicious look was on every thing.

"Do they always keep a house closed up this way that has a piano in it?" asked Cash, mysteriously.

"Certainly," replied Mercer, "the damp would destroy its tones."

Repeated knocks at the doors, and finally at the windows, satisfied both Cash and Mercer that nobody was at home. In the midst of their disappointment, Cash discovered a singular machine at the end of the gallery, crossed by bars and rollers, and surmounted with an enormous crank. Cash approached it on tiptoe; he had a presentiment that he beheld the object of his curiosity, and as its intricate character unfolded itself, he gazed with distended eyes, and asked Mercer, with breathless anxiety, "*what that was?*"

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Mercer turned to the thing as coolly as a north wind to an icicle, and said, "that was it."

"That IT!!" exclaimed Cash, opening his eyes still wider; and then, recovering himself, he asked to see "the tones."

Mercer pointed to the cross-bars and rollers. With trembling hands, and a resolution that would enable a man to be scalped without winking, Cash reached out his hand, and seized the handle of the crank; (Cash at heart was a brave and fearless man;) he gave it a turn, the machinery grated harshly, and seemed to clamour for something to be put in its maw.

"What delicious sounds!" said Cash.

"Beautiful!" observed the complacent Mercer, at the same time seizing Cash's arm, and asking him to desist, for fear of breaking the instrument or getting it out of tone.

The simple caution was sufficient; and Cash, in the joy of the moment at what he had done and seen, looked as conceited as Mo Mercer himself. Busy indeed was Cash, from this time forward, in explaining to gaping crowds the exact appearance of the piano, how he had actually taken hold of it, and, as his friend Mo Mercer observed, "pulled music out of it."

The curiosity of the village was thus allayed, and it died comparatively away; Cash, however, having rose to almost as much importance as Mo Mercer, for having seen and handled the thing.

Our "northern family" knew little or nothing of all this excitement; they received the visits and con-

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gratulations of the hospitable villagers, and resolved to give a grand party to return some of the kindness they had received, and the piano was for the first time moved into the parlour. No invitation on this occasion was neglected; early at the post was every visiter, for it was rumoured that Miss Patience Doolittle would, in course of the evening, "perform on the piano."

The excitement was immense. The supper was passed over with a contempt that rivals that cast upon an excellent farce played preparatory to a dull tragedy, in which the *star* is to appear. The furniture was all critically examined; but nothing could be discovered answering Cash's description. An enormously *thick-leafed table*, with a "spread" upon it, attracted little attention, *timber* being so cheap in a new country, and so everybody expected soon to see the piano "brought in."

Mercer, of course, was the hero of the evening; he talked much and loud. Cash, as well as several young ladies, went into hysterics at his wit. Mercer grew exceedingly conceited even for him, as the evening wore away; he asserted the company present reminded him of his two visits to the "Capitol," and other associations equally exclusive and peculiar.

The evening wore on apace, and still no piano. The hope deferred that maketh the heart sick, was felt by some elderly ladies, and by a few younger ones; and Mercer was solicited to ask Miss Patience Doolittle to favour the company with the presence of the piano.

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"Certainly," said Mercer. With the grace of a city dandy, he called upon the lady to gratify all present with a little music, prefacing his request with the remark, that if she was fatigued, "his friend Cash could give the machine a *turn*."

Miss Patience smiled, and looked at Cash.

Cash's knees trembled.

All eyes in the room turned upon him.

Cash sweat all over.

Miss Patience said she was gratified to hear that Mr. Cash was a musician; she admired people who had a musical taste. Whereupon Cash fell into a chair, as he afterwards observed, "chawed-up."

Oh that Beau Brummel or any of his admirers could have seen Mo Mercer all this while! Calm as a summer morning, and as complacent as a newly-painted sign; he smiled and patronised, and was the only unexcited person in the room.

Miss Patience rose, a sigh escaped from all present,—the piano was evidently to be brought in. She approached the thick-leafed table, and removed the covering, throwing it carelessly and gracefully aside; opened it, and presented the beautiful arrangement of dark and white keys.

Mo Mercer at this, for the first time in his life, looked confused; he was Cash's authority in his descriptions of the appearance of the piano; while Cash himself began to recover the moment he ceased to be an object of attention. Many a whisper now ran through the room as to the "tones," and more particularly the "crank;" none could see them.

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Miss Patienee took her seat, ran her fingers over a few octaves, and if "Moses in Egypt" was not perfectly *executed*, Moses in Hardscrabble *was*. The music ceased. "Miss," said Cash, the moment he could express himself, so entranced was he by the music,—"Miss Doolittle, what was that instrument Mo Mercer showed me in your gallery once, that went by a crank, and had rollers in it?"

It was now the time for Miss Patience to blush; so away went the blood to her cheeks, with confusion; she hesitated, stammered, and said, "if Mr. Cash must know, that it was a–a–a–*yankee washing machine*."

The name grated on Mo Mercer's ears as if rusty nails had been thrust into them; the heretofore invulnerable Mercer's knees trembled; the sweat started to his brow as he heard the taunting whispers of "visiting the Capitol twice," and seeing pianos as plenty as woodchucks.

The fashionable vices of envy and maliciousness were that moment sown in the village of Hardscrabble; and Mo Mercer, the great and confident, the happy and self-possessed, surprising as it may seem, was the first victim sacrificed to their influence. Time wore on, and pianos became common, and Mo Mercer less popular; and he finally disappeared altogether on the evening of the day a yankee pedler of notions sold, to the highest bidder, "six patent, warranted, and improved Mo Mercer pianos."

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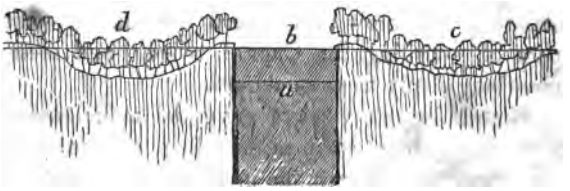
PISCATORY ARCHERY.*

In treating of the most beautiful and novel sport of arrow-fishing, its incidents are so interwoven

* The writer would mention, as a preliminary, that in speaking of fishes; no scientific names are used; he refers to some that are familiar, the carp, for instance, of others that he believes are not yet classified by naturalists. As far as possible, the technical names peculiar to the sport described are used, as they are always more characteristic than any other.



a, The level of the Mississippi, at its ordinary stage of water. *b*, The height of the spring rise. *c*, *d*, The "dry lakes." By examination of the above drawing, an idea may be formed of the manner of the rises of the Mississippi. The observer will notice that when the water is at *a*, the lakes *c* and *d* will be *dry*, affording a fine hunting-ground for deer, &c. When the water is at *b*, the lakes are formed, and arrow-fishing is pursued. (See description.) A correct idea may also be formed by what is meant by a *water-line* on the trees, indicating the last rise; the water-line will be formed of the sediment settling on the trees at the line *b*, marked above.

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with ten thousand accessories, that we scarce know how to separate our web without breaking it, or destroying a world of interest hidden among the wilds of the American forest. The lakes over which the arrow-fisher twangs his bow, in the pleasant spring-time, have disappeared long before the sere and yellow leaf of autumn appears, and the huntsman's horn and the loud-mouthed pack clamour melodiously after the scared deer upon their bottoms. To explain this phenomenon, the lover of nature must follow us until we exhibit some of the vagaries of the great Mississippi; and, having fairly got our "flood and field" before us, we will engage heartily in the sport.

If you will descend with me from slightly broken ground through which we have been riding, covered with forest trees singularly choked up with undergrowth, to an expanse of country beautifully open between the trees, the limbs of which start out from the trunk, some thirty feet above the ground, you will find at your feet a herbage that is luxuriant, but scanty; high over your head, upon the trees, you will perceive *a line* marking what has evidently been an overflow of water; you can trace the beautiful level upon the trees as far as the eye can reach. It is in the fall of the year, and a squirrel drops an acorn upon your shoulder, and about your feet are the sharp-cut tracks of the nimble deer. You are standing in the centre of what is called, by hunters, a "dry lake." As the warm air of April favours the opening flowers of spring, the waters of the Mississippi, increased by the melting snows of the north, swell within its low banks, and rush in a

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thousand streams back into the swamps and lowlands that lie upon its borders; the torrent sweeps along into the very reservoir in which we stand, and the waters swell upwards until they find a level with the fountain itself. Thus is formed the arrow-fisher's lake. The brawny oak, the graceful pecan, the tall poplar, and delicate beech spring from its surface in a thousand tangled limbs, looking more beautiful, yet most unnatural, as the water reflects them downwards, hiding completely away their submerged trunks. The arrow-fisher now peeps in the nest of the wild bird from his little boat, and runs its prow plump into the hollow that marks the doorway of some cunning squirrel. In fact, he navigates for a while, his bark where, in the fall of the year, the gay-plumed songster and the hungry hawk plunge midair, and float not more swiftly nor gayly, on light pinioned wings, than he in his swift canoe.

A chapter from nature: and who unfolds the great book so understandingly, and learns so truly from its wisdom, as the piscator? The rippling brook as it dances along in the sunshine bears with it the knowledge, there is truthfulness in water, though it be not in a well. We can find something, if we will, to love and admire under every wave; and the noises of every tiny brook are tongues that speak eloquently to nature's true priests.

We have marked that, with the rise of the waters the fish grow gregarious, and that they rush along in schools *with the waters that flow inland* from the river, that they thus choose these temporary sylvan lakes as depositories of their spawn; thus wittingly

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providing against that destruction which would await their young in the highways of their journeyings. It is a sight to wonder at in the wilds of the primitive forest, to see the fish rushing along the narrow inlets, with the current, in numbers incredible to the imagination, leaping over the fallen tree that is only half buried in the surface of the stream, or stayed a moment in their course by the meshes of the strong net, either bursting it by force of numbers, or granting its wasteful demands by thousands, without seemingly to diminish the multitude more than a single leaf would, taken from its foliage. We have marked, too, that these fish would besport themselves in their new homes, secluding themselves in the shadows of the trees and banks; and, as the summer heats come on, they would grow unquiet; the outlets leading to the great river they had left would be thronged by what seemed to be busy couriers; and when the news finally spread of *falling water*, one night would suffice to make the lake, before so thronged with finny life, deserted; and a few nights, perhaps, will only pass, when the narrow bar will obtrude itself between the inland lake and the river that supplied it with water. Such was the fish's wisdom, seen and felt, where man, with his learning and his nicely wrought mechanisms, would watch in vain the air, the clouds, and see "no signs" of falling water.*

* It may not be uninteresting to naturalists to be informed, that these fish run into the inland lakes to spawn, and they do it with the rise of the water of course. These overflows are annual. A few years since the season was very singular,

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Among arrow-fishermen there are technicalities, an understanding of which will give a more ready idea of the sport. The surfaces of these inland lakes are unruffled by the winds or storms; the heats of the sun seem to rest upon them; they are constantly sending into the upper regions warm mists. Their surfaces, however, are covered with innumerable bubbles, either floating about, or breaking into little circling ripples. To the superficial observer these air-bubbles mean little or nothing; to the arrow-fisherman, they are the very *language of his art;* visible writing upon the unstable water, unfolding the secrets of the depths below, and guiding him, with unerring certainty, in his pursuits.

Seat yourself quietly in this little skiff, and while I paddle quietly out into the lake, I will translate to you these apparent wonders, and give you a lesson in the simple language of nature. "An air-bubble is an air-bubble," you say, and "your fine distinctions must be in the imagination." Well! then mark how stately ascends that large globule of air; if you will time each succeeding one by your watch, you will find that while they appear, it is at regular intervals, and when they burst upon the surface of the water,

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and there were *three* distinct rises and falls of water, and at each rise the fish followed the water inland, and spawned: a remarkable example where the usual order of nature was reversed in one instance, and yet continuing blindly consistent in another. It is also very remarkable that the young fish, native of the lakes, are as interested to mark the indications of falling water as those that come into them; and in a long series of years of observation, but one fall was ever known where the fish were in the lakes.

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there is the least spray in the world for an instant sparkling in the sun. Now, yonder, if you will observe, are very minute bubbles that seem to *simmer* towards the surface. Could you catch the air of the first bubble we noticed, and give it to an ingenious chemist, he would tell you that it was a light gas, that exhaled from decaying vegetable matter. The arrow-fisherman will tell you they come from an old stump, and are denominated *dead bubbles.* That "simmering" was made by some comfortable turtle, as he gaps open his mouth and gives his breath to the surrounding element.

Look ahead of you: when did you ever see an Archimedean screw more beautifully marked out than by that group of bubbles? They are very light, indeed, and seem thus gracefully to struggle into the upper world; they denote the eager workings of some terrapin in the soft mud at the bottom of the lake. In the shade of yonder lusty oak you will perceive what arrow-fishermen call a "feed;" you see the bubbles are entirely unlike any we have noticed; they come rushing upwards swiftly, like handfuls of silver shot. They are lively and animated to look at, and are caused by the fish below, as they, around the root of that very oak, search for insects for food. To those bubbles the arrow-fisherman hastens for game: they are made by the fish he calls legitimate for his sport.

In early spring the fish are discovered, not only by the bubbles they make, but by various sounds uttered while searching for food. These sounds are

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familiarized, and betray the kind of fish that make them. In late spring, from the middle of May to June, the fish come near the surface of the water and expose their mouths to the air, keeping up, at the same time, a constant motion with it, called "piping." Fish thus exposed are in groups, and are called a "float." The cause of this phenomenon is hard to explain, all reasons given being unsatisfactory. As it is only exhibited in the hottest of weather, it may be best accounted for in the old verse:

"The sun, from its perpendicular height,
Illumed the depths of the sea;
The fishes, beginning to sweat,
Cry, 'Dang it, how hot we shall be!'"

There are several kinds of fish that attract the attention of the arrow-fishermen. Two kinds only are professedly pursued, the "carp" and the "buffalo." Several others, however, are attacked for the mere purpose of amusement, among which we may mention a species of perch, and the most extraordinary of all fish, the "gar."

The carp is a fish known to all anglers. Its habits must strike every one familiar with them, as being eminently in harmony with the retreats we have described. In these lakes they vary in weight from five to thirty pounds, and are preferred by arrow-fishermen to all other fish. The "buffalo," a sort of fresh-water sheep's-head, is held next in estimation. A species of perch is also destroyed, that vary from three to ten pounds; but as they are full of bones

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and coarse in flesh, they are killed simply to test the skill of the arrow-fisherman.*

The incredible increase of fishes has been a matter of immemorial observation. In the retired lakes and streams we speak of, but for a wise arrangement of Providence, it seems not improbable that they would outgrow the very space occupied by the element in which they exist. To prevent this consummation, there are fresh-water fiends, more terrible than the wolves and tigers of the land, that prowl on the finny tribe with an appetite commensurate with their plentifulness, destroying millions in a day, yet leaving, from their abundance, untold numbers to follow their habits and the cycle of their existence undisturbed.

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* The carp to which we allude is so accurately described in its habits in "Blane's Encyclopedia of Rural Sports," when speaking of the European carp, that we are tempted to make one or two extracts, that are remarkable for their truthfulness as applied to the section of the United States where arrow-fishing is a sport. In the work we allude to we have the following:

"The usual length of the carp in our own country (England) is from about twelve to fifteen or sixteen inches; but *in warm climates*, it often arrives at the length of two, three, or four feet, and to the weight of twenty, thirty, or even forty pounds." Par. 3448. Again, "The haunts of the carp of stagnant water are, during the spring and autumn months, in the deepest parts, particularly near the flood-gates by which water *is received and let off*. In the summer months they frequent the weed beds, and *come near to the surface*, and particularly are fond of aquatic plants, which spring from the bottom and rise to the top." Par. 3453. We find the fish retains the same distinctive habits in both hemispheres, altering only from the peculiarities of the country.

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These terrible destroyers have no true representatives in the sea; they seem to be peculiar to waters tributary to the Mississippi. There are two kinds of them, alike in office, but distinct in species; they are known by those who fish in the streams they inhabit as the "gar." They are, when grown to their full size, twelve or fifteen feet in length, voracious monsters to look at, so well made for strength, so perfectly protected from assault, so capable of inflicting injury. The smaller kind, growing not larger than six feet, have a body that somewhat resembles in form the pike, covered by what look more like large flat heads of wrought iron, than scales, which it is impossible to remove without cutting them out, they are so deeply imbedded in the flesh. The jaws of this monster form about one-fourth of its whole length; they are shaped like the bill of a goose, armed in the interior with triple rows of teeth, as sharp and well set as those of a saw. But *the terror* is the "alligator gar," a monster that seems to combine all the most destructive powers of the shark and the reptile. The alligator gar grows to the enormous length of fifteen feet; its head resembles the alligator's; within its wide-extended jaws glisten innumerable rows of teeth, running down into its very throat in solid columns. Blind in its instinct to destroy, and singularly tenacious of life, it seems to prey with untiring energy, and with an appetite that is increased by gratification. Such are the fish that are made victims of the mere sport of the arrow-fisherman.

The implements of the arrow-fisherman are a strong bow, five or six feet long, made of black

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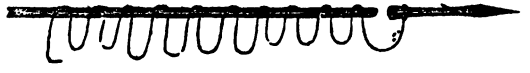
locust or of cedar, (the latter being preferred.) An arrow of ash, three feet long, pointed with an iron spear of peculiar construction. The spear is eight inches long, one end has a socket, in which is fitted *loosely* the wooden shaft; the other end is a flattened point; back of this point there is inserted the barb, which shuts into the iron as it enters an object, but will open if attempted to be drawn out. The whole of this iron-work weighs three ounces. A cord is attached to the spear, fifteen or twenty feet long, about the size of a crow quill, by which is held the fish when struck.



Of the water-craft used in arrow-fishing, much might be said, as it introduces the common Indian canoe, or as it is familiarly termed, the "dug out," which is nothing more than a trunk of a tree, shaped according to the humour or taste of its artificer, and hollowed out. We have seen some of these rude barks that claimed but one degree of beauty or utility beyond the common log, and we have seen others as gracefully turned as was ever the bosom of the loving swan, and that would, as gracefully as Leda's bird, spring through the rippling waves. To the uninitiated, the guidance of a canoe is a mystery. The grown-up man, who first attempts to move on skates over the glassy ice, has a command of his limbs, and a power of locomotion, that the novice in canoe navigation has not. Never at rest, it seems to rush from under his feet; overbalanced by an

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overdrawn breath, it precipitates its victim into the water. Every effort renders it more and more unmanageable, until it is condemned as worthless. But let a person accustomed to its movements take it in charge, and it gayly launches into the stream; whether standing or sitting, the master has it entirely under his control, moving any way with a quickness, a pliability, quite wonderful, forward, sideways, backwards; starting off in an instant, or while at the greatest speed, instantly stopping still, and doing all this more perfectly than any other water-craft of the world. The arrow-fisher prefers a canoe with very little rake, quite flat on the bottom, and not more than fifteen feet long, so as to be turned quick. Place in this simple craft the simpler paddle, lay beside it the arrow, the bow, the cord, and you have the whole outfit of the arrow-fisherman.

In arrow-fishing, two persons only are employed; each one has his work designated—"the paddler" and "bowman." Before the start is made, a perfect understanding is had, so that their movements are governed by signs. The delicate canoe is pushed into the lake, its occupants scarcely breathe to get it balanced, the paddler is seated in its bottom, near its centre, where he remains, governing the canoe in all its motions, without *ever taking the paddle from the water*. The fisherman stands at the bow; around the wrist of his left hand is fastened, by a loose loop, the cord attached to the arrow, which cord is wound around the forefinger of the same hand, so that when paying off, it will do so easily. In the same hand is, of course, held the bow. In the right, is

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"The bowman draws his arrow to the head."—*Page* 41.

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carried the arrow, and by its significant pointing, the paddler gives directions for the movements of the canoe. The craft glides along, scarcely making a ripple; a "feed" is discovered, over which the canoe stops; the bowman draws his arrow to the head; the game, disturbed, is seen in the clear water rising slowly and perpendicularly, but otherwise perfectly motionless; the arrow speeds its way; in an instant the shaft shoots into the air, and floats quietly away, while the wounded fish, carrying the spear in its body, endeavours to escape. The "pull" is managed so as to come directly from the bow of the canoe; it lasts but for a moment before the transfixed fish is seen, fins playing, and full of agonizing life, dancing on the top of the water, and in another instant more lies dead at the bottom of the canoe. The shaft is then gone after, picked up, and thrust into the spear; the cord is again adjusted, and the canoe moves towards the merry makers of those swift ascending bubbles, so brightly displaying themselves on the edge of that deep shade, cast by yonder evergreen oak.

There is much in the associations of arrow-fishing that gratifies taste, and makes it partake of a refined and intellectual character. Besides the knowledge it gives of the character of fishes, it practises one in the curious refractions of water. Thus will the arrow-fisherman, from long experience, drive his pointed shaft a fathom deep for game, when it would seem, to the novice, a few inches would be more than sufficient. Again, the waters that supply the arrow-fisherman with game, afford subsistence to in-

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numerable birds, and he has exhibited before him the most beautiful displays of their devices to catch the finny tribe. The kingfisher may be seen the livelong day, acting a prominent part, bolstering up its fantastic topknot, as if to apologize for a manifest want of neck; you can hear it always scolding and clamorous among the low brush, and overhanging limits of trees, eyeing the minnows as they glance along the shore, and making vain essays to fasten them in his bill. The hawk, too, often swoops down from the clouds, swift as the bolt of Jove; the cleft air whistles in the flight; the sporting fish playing in the sunlight is snatched up in the rude talons, and borne aloft, the reeking water from its scaly sides falling in soft spray upon the upturned eye that traces its daring course. But we treat of fish, and not of birds.

Yonder is our canoe; the paddle has stopped it short, just where you see those faint bubbles; the water is very deep beneath them, and reflects the frail bark and its occupants, as clearly as if they were floating in mid-air. The bowman looks into the water—the fish are out of sight, and not disturbed by the intrusion above them. They are eating busily, judging from the ascending bubbles. The bowman lets fall the "heel" of his arrow on the bottom of the canoe, and the bubbles instantly cease. The slight tap has made a great deal of noise in the water, though scarcely heard out of it. There can be seen rising to the surface a tremendous carp. How quietly it comes upwards, its pectoral fins playing like the wings of the sportive butterfly. Another

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moment, and the cold iron is in its body. Paralyzed for an instant, the fish rises to the surface as if dead, then, recovering itself, it rushes downwards, until the cord that holds it prisoner tightens, and makes the canoe tremble; the effort has destroyed it, and without another struggle it is secured.

When the fish first come into the lakes, they move in pairs on the surface of the water, and while so doing they are shot, as it is called, "flying." In early spring fifteen or twenty fish are secured in an hour. As the season advances, three or four taken in the same length of time is considered quite good success. To stand upon the shore, and see the arrow-fisherman busily employed, is a very interesting exhibition of skill, and of the picturesque. The little "dug out" seems animate with intelligence; the bowman draws his long shaft, you see it enter the water, and then follows the glowing sight of the fine fish sparkling in the sun, as if sprinkled with diamonds. At times, too, when legitimate sport tires, some ravenous gar that heaves in sight is made a victim; aim is taken just ahead of his dorsal fin; secured, he flounders a while, and then drags off the canoe as if in harness, skimming it almost out of the water with his speed. Fatigued, finally, with his useless endeavours to escape, he will rise to the surface, open his huge mouth, and gasp for air. The water that streams from his jaws will be coloured with blood from the impaled fish that still struggle in the terrors of his barbed teeth. Rushing ahead again, he will, by eccentric movements, try the best skill of the paddler to keep his canoe from over-

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turning into the lake, a consummation not always unattained. The gar finally dies, and is dragged ashore; the buzzard revels on his carcass, and every piscator contemplates, with disgust, the great enemy to his game, the terrible monarch of the fresh-water seas.

The crumbling character of the alluvial banks that line our southern streams, the quantity of fallen timber, the amount of "snags" and "sawyers," and the great plentifulness of game, make the beautiful art of angling, as pursued in England, impossible. The veriest tyro, who finds a delicate reed in every nook that casts a shadow on the water, with his rough line, and coarser hook, *can catch fish.* The greedy perch, in all its beautiful varieties, swim eagerly and quickly around the snare, and swallow it, without suspicion that a worm is not a worm, or that appearances are ever deceitful. The jointed rod, the scientific reel, cannot be used; the thick hanging bow, the rank grass, the sunken log, the far reaching *melumbrium*, the ever still water, make these delicate appliances useless. Arrow-fishing only, of all the angling in the interior streams of the south-west, comparatively speaking, claims the title of *an art*, as it is pursued with a skill and a thorough knowledge that tell only with the experienced, and to the novice is an impossibility.

The originators of arrow-fishing deserve the credit of striking out a rare and beautiful amusement, when the difficulties of securing their game did not require it, showing that it resulted in the spirit of true sport alone.

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The origin of arrow-fishing we know not; the country where it is pursued is comparatively of recent settlement; scarce three generations have passed away within its boundaries. We asked the oldest piscator that lived in the vicinity of these "dry lakes" for information, and he told us that it was "old Uncle Zac," and gave us his history in a brief and pathetic manner, concluding his reminiscences of the great departed as follows:

"Uncle Zac never know'd nothing 'bout flies, or tickling trout, but it took him to tell the differance 'twixt a yarth-worm, a grub, or the young of a wasp's nest; in fact, he know'd fishes amazin', and bein' natur-ally a hunter, he went to shooten 'em with a bow and arrer, to keep up yearly times in his history, when he tuck inguns, and yerther varmints in the same way."

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PLACE DE LA CROIX.

A ROMANCE OF THE WEST.

THERE is much of beautiful romance in the whole history of the early settlements of Florida. De Soto and Ponce de Leon have thrown around the records of their searches for gold and the waters of life, a kind of dreamy character that renders them more like traditions of a spiritual than of a real world. They and their followers were men of stern military discipline, who had won honours in their conquests over the Moors; and they came hither not as emigrants, seeking an asylum from oppression, but as proud nobles, anxious to add to their numerous laurels, by conquests in a new world. The startling discoveries,—the fruits, the gold and the natives that appeared with Columbus at the court of Isabella,—gave to fancy an impetus, and to enthusiasm a power, that called forth the pomp of the "Infallible Church" to mingle her sacred symbols with those of arms; and they went joined together through the wilds of America. Among the beautiful and striking customs of those days was the erection of the cross at the mouths of rivers and prominent points of land that presented themselves to the discoverers. The sacred symbol thus reared in solitude seemed to shadow forth the future, when the dense forests would be

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filled with its followers instead of the wild savage; and it cheered the lonely pilgrim in his dangerous journeys, bringing to his mind all the cherished associations of this life, and directing his thoughts to another world. In the putting up of these crosses, as they bore the arms of the sovereign whose subjects erected them, and as they were indicative of civil jurisdiction and empire, the most prominent and majestic locations were selected, where they could be seen for miles around, towering above every other object, speaking the advances of the European, and giving title to the lands over which they cast their shadows. Three hundred years ago the sign of the cross was first raised on the banks of the Mississippi. From one of the few bluffs or high points of land that border that swift running river, De Soto, guided by the aborigines of the country, was the first European that looked upon its turbid waters, soon to be his grave. On this high bluff, taking advantage of a lofty cotton-wood tree, he caused its majestic trunk to be shorn of its limbs; and on this tall shaft placed the beam that formed the cross. This completed, the emblazoned banners of Spain and Arragon were unfurled to the breeze, and, amid the strains of martial music and the firing of cannon, the steel-clad De Soto, assisted by the priests in his train, raised the host to heaven, and declared the reign of Christianity commenced in the valley of the Mississippi. The erection of this touching symbol in the great temple of nature was full of poetry. The forests, like the stars, declare the wonderful works of the Creator. In the silent

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grandeur of our primeval woods, in their avenues of columns, their canopies of leaves, their festoons of vines, the cross touched the heart, and spoke more fully its office than ever it will glistening among the human greatness of a Milan cathedral, or the solemn grandeur of a St. Peters. Two hundred years after Ponce de Leon mingled his dust with the sands of the peninsula of Florida, and De Soto reposed beneath the current of the Mississippi, the same spirit of religious and military enthusiasm pervaded the settlements made by both French and Spanish in this "land of flowers." Among the adventurers of that day were many who mingled the romantic ambition of the crusaders with the ascetic spirit of the monk, and who looked upon themselves as ambassadors of religion to new nations in a new world. Of such was Rousseau. It requires little imagination to understand the disappointment that such a man would meet with in the forest, and as an intruder of the untractable red man. The exalted notions of Rousseau ended in despondence, away from the pomp and influence of his church. Having been nurtured in the "Eternal city," he had not the zeal, and lacked the principle, to become an humble teacher to humbler recipients of knowledge.

Disregarding his priestly office, he finally mingled in the dissipations of society, and in the year 1736, he started off as a military companion to D'Arteguette in his expedition among the Chickasas. The death of D'Arteguette and his bravest troops, and the dispersion of his Indian allies, left Rousseau

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a wanderer, surrounded by implacable enemies, he being one of the few who escaped the fate of battle.

Unaccustomed to forest life, more than a thousand miles from the Canadas, he became a prey of imaginary and real dangers. Unprovided with arms, his food was of roots or herbs. At night the wild beasts howled round his cold couch, and every stump in the daytime seemed to conceal an Indian.

Now it was that Rousseau reviewed the incidents of his past life with sorrow. He discovered, when it was too late, that he had lost his peace of mind, and his hopes of future existence for a momentary enjoyment. Wasting with watching and hunger, he prayed to the Virgin to save him, that he might, by a long life of penance, obliterate his sins. On the twelfth day of his wanderings he sank upon the earth to die, and, casting his eyes upward in prayer, he saw, far in the distance, towering above every other object, the cross! It seemed a miracle and inspired with strength his trembling limbs; and he pressed forward that he might breathe his last at its foot. As he reached it, a smile of triumph lighted up his wayworn features, and he fell insensible to the earth. Never, perhaps, was this emblem more beautifully decorated or more touchingly displayed than was the one that towered over Rousseau. From indications, some fifteen years might have elapsed since the European pilgrim had erected it. One of the largest forest trees had been chosen that stood upon the surrounding bluffs; the tall trunk tapered upward with the proportion of a Corinthian column, which, with the piece forming the cross,

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was covered with ten thousand of those evergreen vines that spread such a charm over the southern landscape. It seemed as if nature had paid tribute to the sacred symbol, and festooned it with a perfection and beauty worthy of her abundance. The honey-suckle and the ivy, the scarlet creeper and fragrant jasmine, the foliage enameled with flowers, shed upon the repentant, and now insensible, Rousseau a shower of fragrance. Near where he lay, there was a narrow and amply-worn footpath. You could trace it, from where it lost itself in the deep forests, to where it wound round the steep-washed bank until it touched the water's edge. At this point were to be seen the prints of footsteps; and traces of small fires were also visible, one of which still sent up puffs of smoke. Here it was that the Choctaw maidens and old women performed their rude labour of washing. In the morning and evening sun, a long line of the forest children might be seen, with clay jars and skins filled with water, carrying them upon their heads, and stringing up, single file, the steep bank and losing themselves in the woods; with their half-clad and erect forms, making a most picturesque display, not unlike the processions figured in the hieroglyphical paintings of Egypt.

Soon after Rousseau fell at the cross, there might have been seen emerging from the woods, and following the path we have described, a delicately formed Indian girl. In her hand was a long reed and a basket, and she came with blithe steps towards the river. As she passed the cross, the form of Rousseau met her eyes. Stopping and examining him,

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with almost overpowering curiosity, she retreated with precipitation, but returned almost instantly. She approached nearer, until the wan and insensible face met hers. Strange as was his appearance and colour, the chord of humanity was touched, the woman forgot both fear and curiosity, in her anxiety to allay visible suffering. A moment had hardly elapsed before water was thrown in his face and held to his lips. The refreshing beverage brought him to consciousness. He stared wildly about, and discovered the Indian form bending over him; he sank again insensible to the earth. Like a young doe the girl bounded away and disappeared.

A half hour might have elapsed, when there issued out of the forest a long train of Indians. At their head was the young maiden surrounded by armed warriors; in the rear followed women and children. They approached Rousseau, whose recovery was but momentary, and who was now unconscious of what was passing around him. The crowd examined him first with caution, gradually, with familiarity; their whispers became animated conversation, and, finally, blended in one noisy confusion. There were among those present many who had heard of the white man and of his powers, but none had ever seen one before. One Indian, more bold than the rest, stripped the remnant of a cloak from Rousseau's shoulder; another, emboldened by this act, caught rudely hold of his coat, and as he pulled it aside, there fell from his breast a small gilt crucifix, held by a silken cord. Its brilliancy excited the cupidity of all, and many were the eager

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hands that pressed forward to obtain it. An old chief gained the prize, and fortunately for Rousseau, his prowess and influence left him in undisputed possession. As he examined the little trinket, the Indian girl we have spoken of, the only female near Rousseau, crossed her delicate fingers, and pointed upward. The old chief instantly beheld the similarity between the large and small symbol of Christianity, and extending it aloft, with all the dignity of a cardinal, the crowd shouted as they saw the resemblance, and a change came over them all.

They associated at once the erection of the large cross with Rousseau; and as their shout had again called forth exhibitions of life from his insensible form, they threw his cloak over him, suspended the cross to his neck, brought, in a moment, green boughs, with which a litter was made, and bore him with all respect toward their lodges. The excitement and exercise of removal did much to restore him to life; a dish of maize did more; and nothing could exceed his astonishment on his recovery, that he should be treated with such kindness; and as he witnessed the respect paid the cross, and was shown by rude gestures, that he owed his life to its influence, he sank upon his knees, overwhelmed with its visible exhibition of power, and satisfied that his prayer for safety had been answered in the perfection of a miracle. The Choctaws, into whose hands the unfortunate Rousseau had fallen, (although he was not aware of the difference,) were not the bloody-minded Cherokees, from whom he had so lately escaped. Years before, the inhabitants of the little village, on

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their return from a hunting expedition discovered the cross we have described; its marks then were such as would be exhibited a few days after its erection. Footsteps were seen about its base, that from their variance with the mark left by the moccasin, satisfied the Indians that it was not erected by any of their people. The huge limbs that had been shorn from the trunk bore fresh marks of terrible cuts, which the stone hatchet could not have made.

As it is natural to the Indian mind, on the display of power they cannot explain, they appropriately, though accidentally, associated the cross with a Great Spirit, and looked upon it with wonder and admiration. Beside the cross there was found an axe, left by those who had formed it. This was an object of the greatest curiosity to its finders. They struck it into the trees, severed huge limbs, and performed other powerful feats with it, and yet fancied their own rude stone instruments failed to do the same execution from want of a governing spirit equal to that which they imagined presided over the axe, and not from difference of material.

The cross and the axe were associated together in the Indians' minds; and the crucifix of Rousseau connected him with both. They treated him, therefore, with all the attention they would bestow upon a being who is master of a superior power. The terrible and strange incidents that had [illegible] the life of Rousseau, since the defeat of his military associate, D'Arteguette, seemed to him, as he recalled them in his mind, to have occupied an age. His dreams were filled with scenes of torment and death. He would start

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from his sleep with the idea that an arrow was penetrating his body, or that the bloody knife was at his heart; these were then changed into visions of starvation, or destruction by wild beasts. Recovering his senses, he would find himself in a comfortable lodge, reposing on a couch of soft skins; while the simple children of the woods, relieved of their terrors, were waiting to administer to his wants. The change from the extreme of suffering to that of comfort, he could hardly realize. The cross in the wilderness, the respect they paid to the one on his breast, were alike inexplicable; and Rousseau, according to the spirit of his age, felt that a miracle had been wrought in his favour: and on his bending knees he renewed his ecclesiastical vows, and determined to devote his life to enlightening the people among whom Providence had placed him.

The Indian girl who first discovered Rousseau, was the only child of a powerful chief. She was still a maiden, and the slavish labour of savage married life had, consequently, not been imposed upon her.

Among her tribe she was universally considered beautiful; and her hand was sought by all the young "braves" of her tribe. Wayward or indifferent to please, she resolutely refused to occupy any lodge but her father's, however eligible and enviable the settlement might have appeared in the eyes of her associates.

For an Indian girl she was remarkably gentle; and, as Rousseau gradually recovered his strength, he had, through her leisure, more frequent intercourse with her than with any other of the tribe. There was

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also a feeling in his bosom that she was, in the hands of an overruling Providence, the instrument used to preserve his life. Whatever might have been the speculations of the elders of the tribe, as day after day Rousseau courted her society and listened to the sounds of her voice, we do not know; but his attentions to her were indirectly encouraged, and the Indian girl was almost constantly at his side.

Rousseau's plans were formed. The painful experience he had encountered, while following the ambition of worldly greatness, had driven him back into the seclusion of the church, with a love only to end with his life.

He determined to learn the dialect of the people in whose lot his life was cast, and form them into a nation of worthy recipients of the "Holy Church;" and the gentle Indian girl was to him a preceptor, to teach him her language. With this high resolve, he repeated the sounds of her voice, imitated her gesticulations, and encouraged, with marked preference, her society. The few weeks that Rousseau passed among the Choctaws, had made him one bitter, implacable bitter enemy. Unable to explain his office or his intentions, his preference for Chechoula had been marked by the keen eye of a jealous and rejected lover. Wah-a-ola was a young "brave," who had distinguished himself on the hunting and war paths. Young as he was, he had won a name. Three times he had laid the trophies of his prowess at the feet of Chechoula, and as often she had rejected his suit. Astonished at his want of success, he looked upon his mistress as labouring under the

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influence of some charm, for he could find no accepted rival for her hand.

The presence of Rousseau—the marked preference which Chechoula exhibited for his society, settled, in his own mind, that the "pale face" was the charmer. With this conviction, he placed himself conveniently to meet his mistress, and once more pleaded his suit before he exhibited the feelings of hatred which he felt towards Rousseau. The lodge of Chechoula's father was, from the dignity of the chief, at the head of the Indian village, and at some little distance. The impatient Wah-a-ola seated himself near its entrance, where, from his concealment, he could watch whoever entered its door. A short time only elapsed, before he saw, in the cold-moonlight, a group of Indian girls approaching the Indian lodge, in busy conversation, and conspicuously among them all, Chechoula.

Her companions separated from her, and as she entered her father's lodge, a rude buffalo-skin shut her in. Soon after her disappearance, the little groups about the Indian village gradually dispersed; the busy hum of conversation ceased; and when profound stillness reigned, a plaintive note of the whip-poor-will was heard; it grew louder and louder, until it seemed as if the lone bird was perched on the top of the lodge that contained Chechoula. It attracted her ear, for she thrust aside the buffalo-skin, and listened with fixed attention. The bird screamed, and appeared to flutter, as if wounded. Chechoula rushed toward the bushes that seemed to conceal so much distress, when Wah-a-ola sprang

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up and seized her wrist. The affrighted girl stared at her captor for a moment, and then exclaimed, "The snake should not sing like the birds!" Wah-a-ola relaxed not his hold; there was a volcano in his breast, that seemed to overwhelm him as he glared upon Chechoula with blood-shot eyes. Struggling to conceal his emotion, he replied to her question, by asking "if the wild-flowers of the woods were known only to their thorns?" "The water lilies grow upon smooth stones," said Chechoula, striving violently to retreat to her father's lodge. The love of Wah-a-ola was full of jealousy, and the salute and reply of his mistress converted it into hate. Dashing his hand across his brow, on which the savage workings of his passion were plainly visible, he asked, if "a brave" was to whine for a woman like a bear for its cubs? "Go!" said he, flinging Chechoula's arm from him; "go! The mistletoe grows not upon young trees, and the pale face shall be a rabbit in the den of the wolf!" From the time Rousseau was able to walk, he had made a daily pilgrimage to the cross, and there, upon his bended knees, greeted the morning sun. This habit was known to all the tribe. The morning following the scene between Wah-a-ola and Chechoula, he was found dead at the foot of the sacred tree. A poisoned arrow had been driven almost through his body. Great was the consternation of the whole tribe. It was considered a mysterious evidence of impending evil; while not a single person could divine who was the murderer. "The mistletoe grows not upon young trees!" thought Chechoula; and for the first time she knew the full meaning of the words, as she bent over the body of

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Rousseau. She attended his obsequies with a sorrow less visible, but more deep than that of her people; although the whole tribe had, in the short residence of the departed, learned to respect him, and to look upon him as a great "Medicine." His grave was dug where he had so often prayed, and the same sod covered him that drank his heart's blood. According to Indian custom, all that he possessed, as well as those articles appropriated to his use, were buried with him in his grave. His little crucifix reposed upon his breast, and he was remembered as one who had mysteriously come, and as mysteriously passed away. A few years after the events we have detailed, a Jesuit missionary, who understood the Choctaw language, announced his mission to the tribe, and was by them kindly received. His presence revived the recollections of Rousseau, and the story of his being among them was told. The priest explained to them his office, and these wild people, in a short time, erected over the remains of Rousseau a rude chapel; his spirit was called upon as their patron saint, and Chechoula was the first to renounce the superstitions of her tribe, and receive the Holy Sacrament of Baptism. In the year 1829, a small brass cross was picked out of the banks of the Mississippi, near Natchez, at the depth of several feet from the surface. The crucifix was in tolerable preservation, and was exposed by one of those carvings of the soil so peculiar to the Mississippi. The speculations which the finding of this cross called forth, revived the almost forgotten traditions of the story of Rousseau, and of his death and burial at the Place De La Croix.

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WIT OF THE WOODS.

ORIGINALLY the wild turkey was found scattered throughout the whole of our continent, its habits only differing, where the peculiarity of the seasons compelled it to provide against excessive cold or heat. In the "clearing," it only lives in its excellent and degenerated descendant of the farm-yard. In the vast prairies and forests of the "far west," this bird is still abundant, and makes an important addition to the fare of wild life. It is comparatively common on the "frontiers;" but every passing year lessens its numbers, and as their disappearance always denotes their death, their extermination is progressive and certain. In Louisiana, Alabama, South Carolina, and the southern states, there are fastnesses, in which they will find support and protection for a long time to come. The swamps and lowlands that offer no present inducement to "the settler," will shelter them from the rifle; and in the rich productions of the soil they will find a superabundance of food. The same obscurity, however, that protects them, leaves the hole of the wildcat in peace; and this bitter enemy of the turkey wars upon it, and makes its life one of cunning and care. Nor is its finely flavoured meat unappreciated by other destroyers, as the fox and weasel select the young for an evening repast, according to their strength. The

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nest, too, may be made, even the young bird in peace may have broken its shell, and frightened at its own piping note, hid instinctively away, when the Mississippi will rise, bearing upon its surface the waters of a thousand floods, swell within its narrow banks, and overflow the lowlands. The young bird, unable to fly, and too delicate to resist the influence of the wet, sickens and dies. Upon the *dryness* of the season the turkey-hunter builds his hopes of the plentifulness of the game.

The wild turkey-hunter is distinct and peculiar. The eccentric habits of the bird, its exceeding wildness is sympathized with, and enjoyed only by a class of persons, who are themselves different from the ordinary hunter. As a general thing, turkey-hunters, if they are of literary habits, read Izaak Walton, and Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy," and all, learned or unlearned, are enthusiastic disciples of the rod and line. The piscator can be an enthusiastic admirer of the opera, the wild turkey-hunter could not be, for his taste never carries him beyond the simple range of natural notes. Here he excels. Place him in the forest with his pipe, and no rough pan ever piped more wilily, or more in harmony with the scenes around him. The same tube modulates the note of alarm, and the dulcet sound of love; it plays plaintively the complaining of the female, and, in sweet chirps, calls forth the lover from his hiding-place; it carols among the low whisperings of the fledgling, and expresses the mimic sounds of joy at the treasure of food that is found discovered under the fallen leaf, or hidden

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away in the decayed wood. And all this is done so craftily, that ears, on which nature has set her stamp of peculiar delicacy, and the instinct, true almost as the shadow to the sunlight, are both deceived.

It is unnecessary to describe the bird, though we never see it fairly represented except in the forest. The high mettled racer that appears upon the course is no more superior to the well fed cart-horse than is the wild turkey to the tame; in fact nothing living shows more points of health and purity of blood than this noble bird. Its game head and clear hazle eye, the clean firm step, the great breadth of shoulder, and deep chest, strike the most superficial observer. Then there is an absolute commanding beauty about them, when they are alarmed or curious, when they elevate themselves to their full height, bringing their head perpendicular with their feet, and gaze about, every feather in its place, the foot upraised ready at an instant, to strike off at a speed, that, as has been said of the ostrich, "scorneth the horse and his rider."

The wild turkey-hunter is a being of solitude. There is no noise or boisterous mirth in his pursuit. Even the dead leaf, as it sails in circuitous motion to the earth, intrudes upon his caution, and alarms the wary game, which, in its care of preservation, flies as swiftly before the imaginary, as before the real danger. Often, indeed, is the morning's work destroyed by the cracking of a decayed limb under the nimble spring of the squirrel. The deer and timid antelope will stop to gratify curiosity, the hare scents the air for an instant, when alarmed, be-

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fore it dashes off; but the turkey never speculates, never wonders; suspicion of danger prompts it to immediate flight, as quickly as a reality.

The implements of the turkey-hunter are few and simple; the "call," generally made of the large bone of the turkey's wing, and a sure rifle complete the list. The double-barrel fowling-piece is used when the game is plentiful, and requires little or no science to hunt them, aim being taken at the head. A turkey, wounded elsewhere than in the brain, although a rifle ball may have passed through its body, seems to retain the power of locomotion in the most remarkable manner, and will, when thus crippled, run long enough, unless pursued by a dog, to be lost to the hunter.

Where turkeys are plentiful and but little hunted, indifferent persons succeed in killing them; of such hunters we shall not speak. The bird changes its habits somewhat with its haunts, growing wilder as it is most pursued; it may therefore be said to be the wildest of game. Gaining in wisdom according to the necessity, it is a different bird where it is constantly sought for as game, from where it securely lives in the untrodden solitude. The turkey will therefore succeed at times in finding a home in places comparatively "thickly settled," and be so seldom seen, that they are generally supposed to be extinct. Under such circumstances, they fall victims only to the very few hunters who may be said to make a science of their pursuit. "I rather think," said a turkey-hunter, "if you want to find a thing *very cunning*, you need not go to the fox or such

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varmints; take a gobbler. I once hunted regular after the same one for three years, and never saw him twice. I knew the critter's 'yelp' as well as I know Music's, my old dear dog; and his track was as plain to me as the trail of a log hauled through a dusty road. I hunted the gobbler always in the same 'range,' and about the same 'scratchins,' and he got so, at last, that when I 'called,' he would run from me, *taking the opposite direction to my own foot-tracks*. Now the old rascal kept a great deal on a ridge, at the end of which, where it lost itself in the swamp, was a hollow cypress tree. Determined to outwit him, I put on my shoes *heels foremost*, walked leisurely down the ridge, and got into the hollow tree, and gave a 'call,' and boys," said the speaker exultingly, "it would have done you good to have seen that turkey coming towards me on a trot, the fool looking at my tracks, and thinking I had *gone the other way*."

Of all turkey-hunters, our friend W—— is the most experienced; he is a bachelor, lives upon his own plantation, studies, philosophizes, makes fishing tackle, and kills turkeys. With him it is a science reduced to certainty. Place him in the woods where turkeys are, and he is as certain of their bodies as if they were already in his possession. He understands the habits of the bird so well, that he will, on his first essay, on a new hunting-ground, give the exact character of the hunters the turkeys have been accustomed to deal with. The most crafty turkeys are those which W—— seeks, hemmed in by plantations, inhabiting uncultivatable

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land, and always in more or less danger of pursuit and discovery, they become, under such circumstances, beyond any game whatever wild. They seem incapable of being deceived, and taking every thing strange, as possessed to them of danger, whether a moth out of season, or a veteran hunter, they appear to common, and even to uncommon observers, annihilated from the country, were it not for their footprints occasionally to be seen in the soft soil beside the running stream, or in the light dust in the beaten road.

A veteran gobbler, used to all the tricks of the hunter's art, one who has had his wottles cut with shot, against whose well-defended breast has struck the spent ball of the rifle, one, who, although most starved, would walk by the treasures of grain in the "trap" and "pen," a gobbler who will listen to the plaintive note of the female until he has tried its quavers, its length, its repetitions, by every rule nature has given him, and then perhaps not answer, except in a smothered voice for fear of being deceived. Such a turkey will W—— select to break a lance with, and, in spite of the chances against him, win. We, then, here have the best specimen of wild turkey-hunting, an exhibition of skill between the perfection of animal instinct, and the superior intellect of man.

The turkey-hunter, armed with his "call," starts into the forest, he bears upon his shoulder, the trusty rifle. He is either informed of the presence of turkeys, and has a particular place or bird in view, or he makes his way cautiously along the

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banks of some running stream; his progress is slow and silent; it may be that he unexpectedly hears a noise, sounding like distant thunder; he then knows that he is in close proximity of the game, and that he has disturbed it to flight. When such is the case his work is comparatively done.

We will, for illustration, select a more difficult hunt. The day was towards noon, and the patient hunter has met with no "sign," when suddenly a slight noise is heard, not unlike, to unpractised ears, a thousand other woodland sounds; the hunter listens, again the sound is heard, as if a pebble was dropped into the bosom of a little lake. It may be that woodpecker, who, desisting from his labours, has opened his bill to yawn—or, perchance, yonder little bird so industriously scratching among the dead leaves of that young holly. Again, precisely the same sound is heard; yonder, high in the heavens, is a solitary hawk, winging its way over the forests, its rude scream etherealized, might come down to our ears in just such a sound as made the turkey-hunter listen; again the same note, now more distinct. The quick ear of the hunter is satisfied; stealthily he entrenches himself behind a fallen tree, a few green twigs are placed before him, from among which protrudes the muzzle of his rifle. Thus prepared, he takes his "call," and gives one solitary *cluck*, so exquisitely, that it chimes in with the running brook and the rustling leaf.

It may be, that a half a mile off, if the place is favourable to convey sound, is feeding a "gobbler;" prompted by his nature, as he quietly scratches up

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the herbage that conceals his food, he gives utterance to the sounds that first attracted the hunter's attention. Poor bird! he is bent on filling his crop; his feelings are listless, common place; his wings are away; his plumage on his breast seems soiled with rain, his wattles are contracted and pale,—look, he starts, every feather is instantly in its place, he raises his delicate game-looking head full four feet from the ground, and listens; what an eye, what a stride is suggested by that lifted foot! gradually the head sinks; again the bright plumage grows dim, and with a low *cluck*, he resumes his search for food. The treasures of the American forest are before him; the choice pecan-nut is neglected for that immense "grub-worm" that rolls down the decayed stump, too large to crawl,—now that grasshopper is nabbed, presently a hill of ants presents itself, and the bird leans over it, peering down the tiny hole of its entrance, out of which are issuing the industrious insects, with wonderful curiosity. Again that *cluck* greets his ear, up rises the head with lightning swiftness, the bird starts forward a pace or two, looks around in wonder, and answers back. No sound is heard but the falling acorn, and it fairly echoes, as it rattles from limb to limb, and dashes off to the ground. The bird is uneasy, he picks pettishly, smooths down his feathers, elevates his head slowly, and then brings it to the earth; raises his wings as if for flight, jumps upon the limb of a fallen tree, looks about, settles down finally into a brownstudy, and evidently commences thinking. An hour may elapse, and he has resolved the matter over; his

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imagination has become inflamed, he has heard just enough to *wish to hear more*; he is satisfied that no turkey-hunter uttered the sounds that reached his ear, for they were *too few, and far between*, and there rises up in his mind some disconsolate mistress, and he gallantly flies down from his low perch, gives his body a swaggering motion, and utters a distinct and prolonged *cluck*, significant of both surprise and joy. On the instant the dead twigs near by crack, beneath a heavy tread, and he starts off under the impression he is caught; but the meanderings of some poor cow inform him of his mistake. Composing himself, he listens, ten minutes since he challenged, when a low cluck in the distance reaches his ears.

Now, our gobbler is an old bird, and has escaped with his life by a miracle several times He has grown very cunning, indeed. He don't roost two successive nights on the same tree, so that daylight never exposes him to the hunter, who has hidden himself away in the night, to catch him in the morning's dawn. He never gobbles without running a short distance at least, as if alarmed at his own noise. He presumes every thing suspicious, and dangerous naturally, and his experience has heightened the instinct. Twice, when young, was he coaxed within gunshot, but got clear by some fault of the percussion caps. After that, was he fooled by an idle school-boy, who was a kind of ventriloquist, and would have been killed, had not the urchin's gun been overloaded. Three times did he only escape death by heedlessly wandering with his

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thoughtless fellows. Once was he caught in a "pen," and got out by an overlooked hole in its top. Three feathers of his last year's tail, decayed under the weight of a spring-trap. He is, in fact, a very "deep" bird, and will sit and plume himself, when common hunters are about, tooting away, but never so wisely as to deceive him twice. They all reveal themselves by overstepping the modesty of nature, and *woo him too much:* his loves are more coy, far less intrusive. Poor bird! he does not know that W—— is spreading his snare for him, and is even then so sure of his victim, as to be revolving in his mind whether his goodly carcass should be a present to a married friend, or be served up in savoury fumes from his own bachelor, but hospitable board.

The last *cluck* heard by the gobbler fairly roused him, and he presses foward; at one time he runs with speed, then stops as if not yet quite satisfied; something turns him back; still he lingers only for a moment in his course, until coming to a running stream, where he will have to fly; the exertion seems too much for him. Stately parading in the full sunshine, he walks along the margin of the clear stream, admiring his fine person as it is reflected in the sylvan mirror, and then, like some vain lover, tosses his head, as if to say, "let them come to me." The listless gait is resumed, expressive that the chase is given up. Gaining the ascent of a low bank, that lines the stream he has just deserted, he stops at the foot of a young beech; in the green moss that fills the interstices of the otherwise smooth bank is hid

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away a cricket; the turkey picks at it, without catching it; something annoys him. Like the slipper of Cinderella, to the imagination of the young prince, or the glimpses of a waving ringlet, or a jewelled hand to the glowing passions of the young heart, is the remembrance of that sound, that now full two hours since was first heard by our hero, and has been, in that long time, but *twice* repeated. He speculates that in the shady woods that surround him, there must wander a mate; solitary she plucks her food, and calls for me; the monster man, impatiently of his prey, doles not out his music so softly or so daintily. I am not deceived, and by my ungallant fears, she will be won by another *cluck*. How well-timed the call. The gobbler entirely off his guard, contracts himself, opens wide his mouth, and rolls forth, fearlessly, a volume of sound for his answer. The stream is crossed in a flutter, the toes scarce indent themselves in the soft ground over which they pass. On, on they plunge, until their owner's caution again brings them to a halt. We could almost wish that so fine a bird might escape, that there might be given one "call" too much, one that grated unnaturally on the poor bird's ear; but not so; they lead him to his doom, filling his mind with hope and love.

To the bird there is one strange incongruity in the "call," never before has he gone so far with so little success; but the note is perfect, the time most nicely given. Again he rolls forth a loud response, and listens, yet no answer, his progress is slow. The *cluck* again greets his ear; there was a slight quaver

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attached to it this time, like the forming of a second note he is nearing his object of pursuit, and, with an energetic "call;" he rushes forward, his long neck stretched, and his head moving inquiringly from side to side. No longer going round the various obstacles he meets with in his path, but flying over them, as if impatiently, he comes to open ground, and stops.

Some six hundred yards from where he stands may be seen a fallen tree, you can observe some green brush that looks as if it grew out of the very decayed wood; in this "brush" is hidden away the deadly rifle, and its muzzle is protruding towards the open ground. Behind it is the hunter, flat upon the ground, yet so placed that the weapon is at his shoulder. He seems to be as dead as the tree in front of him. Could you watch him closely, you would perceive he scarcely winks for fear of alarming his game. The turkey, still in his exposed situation, gobbles on the instant the hunter raises his "call" to his lips, and gives a prolonged *cluck*, loud and shrill, the first that could really be construed by the turkey into a direct answer. The noble bird, now certain of success, fairly dances with delight; he starts forward, his feathers and neck amorously playing as he advances; now he commences his "strut;" his slender body swells, the beautifully plumage of his breast unfolds itself, his neck curves, drawing the head downward, the wattles grow scarlet, while the skin that covers the head changes like rainbow tints. The long feathers of the wings brush the ground, the tail rises and opens into a semi-

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circle, the gorgeously coloured head becomes beautifully relieved in its centre. On he comes, with a hitching gait, glowing in the sunshine in purple and gold. The siren *cluck* is twice repeated; he contracts his form to the smallest dimensions; upwards rises the head to the highest point; he stands upon his very toes, and looks suspiciously around; fifty yards of distance protects him from the rifle: he even condescends to pick about. What a trial for the expecting hunter! how does he recollect that one breath too much has spoiled a morning's work! The minutes wear on, and the bird again becomes the *caller;* he gobbles, opens his form, and when fully bloomed out, the enchanting *cluck* greets his ear; on he comes, like the gay horse, towards the inspiring music of the drum, or like a gallant bark beating against the wind, gallantly but slowly.

The dark cold barrel of the rifle is now not more silent than is its owner; the game is playing just outside the very edge of its deadly reach; the least mistake and it is gone. One gentle zephyr, one falling twig, might break the charm, and make nature revolt at the coyness apparent in the supposed mistress, and the lover would wing his way full of life to the woods. But on he comes, so still is every thing that you can hear his wings as they brush the ground, singularly plain, while the sun plays in conflicting rays and coloured lights about his gaudily bronzed plumage.

The woods ring in echoing circles back upon you, the sharp report of the rifle is heard; out starts, alarmed by the noise, a blue jay, who squalls as he

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passes in waving lines before you, so suddenly wakened was he from his sleep. But our rare and beautiful bird, our gallant and noble bird, our cunning and game bird, where is he? The glittering plumage, the gay step, the bright eye, all are gone, without a movement of the muscles, he has fallen a headless body to the earth.

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THE

WATER CRAFT OF THE BACKWOODS.

STARTING among the volcanic precipices, eternal snows, and arid deserts of the Rocky mountains, the Snake river winds its sinuous way towards the Pacific; at one time rushing headlong through deep gorges of mountains, and at another time spreading itself out in still lakes, as it sluggishly advances through every varying scenes of picturesque grandeur and of voluptuous softness. In all this variety, the picture only changes from the beautiful to the sublime; while the eye of the civilized intruder, as it speculates on the future, can see on the Snake river, the city, the village, and the castle, in situations more interesting and romantic than they have yet pretended themselves to the world. The solitary trapper, and the wild Indian, are now the sole inhabitants of its beautiful shores; the wigwams of the aborigines, the temporary lodge of the hunter, and the cunning beaver, rear themselves almost side by side, and nature reposes, like a virgin bride in all her beauty and loveliness, soon to be stripped of her natural charms, to fulfil new offices, with a new existence. On an abrupt bank of this beautiful stream, overlooking the surrounding landscape for miles, a spot of all others to be selected for a site

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of beauty and defence, might be seen a few lodges of the Wallawallah Indians. On the opposite shore stood a fine young warrior, decked with all the tinsel gewgaws his savage fancy suggested to catch the love of his mistress. With stealthy step he opened the confused undergrowth that lined the banks, taking therefrom a delicate paddle. He searched in vain, until the truth flashed upon him that some rival had stolen his canoe. Readily would he have dashed into the bosom of the swollen river, and, as another Leander, sought another Hero; but his dress was not to be spoiled. Like a chafed lion he walked along the shore, his bosom alternately torn by rage, love, and vanity, when, far up the bank, he saw a herd of buffalo slaking their thirst in the running stream. Seizing his bow and arrow, with noiseless step he stole upon his victim, and the unerring shaft soon brought it to the earth, struggling with agonies of death. It was only the work of an adept to strip off the skin, and spread it on the ground. Upon it were soon laid the gayly-wrought moccasins, leggins, and hunting-shirt, the trophies of honourable warfare, and the skins of birds of beautiful plumage. The corners of the hide were then brought together, tied with thongs. The bundle was set afloat upon the stream, and its owner dashed in its rear, guiding it to the opposite shore with its contents unharmed. Again decking himself, and bearing his wooing tokens before him, he leapt with the swiftness of a deer to the lodge that contained his mistress, leaving the simplest of all the water-craft of the backwoods to decay upon the ground.

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The helplessness of age, the appealing eyes and the hands of infancy, the gallantry of the lover, hostile excursions of a tribe, are natural incentives to the savage mind to improve upon the mere bundle of inanimated things, that could be safely floated upon the water. To enlarge this bundle, to build up its sides, would be his study and delight; and we have next in the list of backwoods craft, what is styled by the white man, the buffalo-skin boat. This craft is particularly the one of the prairie country, where the materials for its construction are always to be found, and where its builders are always expert. A party of Indians find themselves upon the banks of some swift and deep river; there is no timber to be seen for miles around, larger than a common walking-stick. The Indians are loaded with plunder, for they have made a successful incursion into the territory of some neighbouring tribe, and cannot trust their effects in the water; or they are perchance emigrating to a favourite hunting-ground, and have with them all their domestic utensils, their squaws and children. A boat is positively necessary, and it must be made of the materials at hand. A fire is kindled, and by it is laid a number of long slender poles, formed by trimming off the limbs of the saplings growing on the margin of the stream. While this is going on, some of the braves start in pursuit of buffalo. Two of the stoutest bulls met with are killed and stripped of their skins. These skins are then sewed together. The poles having been well heated, the longest is selected and bent into the proper form for a keel;

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the ribs are then formed and lashed transversely to it, making what would appear to be the skeleton of a large animal. This skeleton is then placed upon the hairy side of the buffalos' skins, when they are drawn round the frame and secured by holes cut in the skin, and hitched on to the ribs. A little pounded slippery-elm bark is used to caulk the seams, and small pieces of wood, cut with a thread-like screw, are inserted in the arrow or bullet holes of the hide. Thus, in the course of two or three hours, a handsome and durable boat is completed, capable of carrying eight or ten men with comfort and safety.

Passing from the prairie, we come to the thick forest, and there we find the perfect water-craft of the backwoods—of variety of the canoe. The inhabitant of the woods never dreams of a boat made of skins; he looks to the timber for a conveyance. Skilled in the knowledge of plants, he knows the exact time when the bark of the tree will readily unwrap from its native trunk. And from this simple material he forms the most beautiful craft that sits upon the water. The rival clubs that sport their boats upon the Thames, or ply them in the harbour of Mannahatta, like things of life—formed as they are by the highest scientific knowledge and perfect manual skill of the two greatest naval nations in the world—are thrown in the shade by the beautiful and simple bark canoe, made by the rude hatchet and knife of the red man. The American forest is filled with trees whose bark can be appropriated to the making of canoes. The pecan, all the hickories, with the birch, grow there in infinite profusion. A tree of

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one of these species, that presents a trunk clear of limbs for fifteen or twenty feet, is first selected. The artisan has nothing but a rude hunting-knife and tomahawk for the instruments of his craft. With the latter he girdles the bark near the root of the tree; this done, he ascends to the proper height, and there makes another girdle; then taking his knife, and cutting through the bark downwards, he separates it entirely from the trunk.

Ascending the tree again, he inserts his knife under the bark, and turning it up, soon forces it with his hand until he can use a more powerful lever. Once well started, he will worm his body between the bark and the trunk, and thus tear it off, throwing it upon the ground like an immense scroll. The "ross," or outside of the bark, is scraped off until it is smooth; the "scull" is then opened, and braces inserted to give the proper width to the gunnels of the canoe. Strong cords are then made from the bark of the linn tree or hickory, the open ends of the bark scroll are pressed together and fastened between clamps, the clamps secured by the cord. If the canoe be intended only for a temporary use, the clamps are left on. A preparation is then made of deer tallow and pounded charcoal, and used in the place of pitch to fill up the seams, and the boat is complete; but if time permit, and the canoe be wanted for ornament, as well as for use, then the clamps are displaced by sewing together the ends of the bark. This simple process produces the most beautiful model of a boat that can be imagined; art cannot embellish the form, or improve upon the simple me-

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chanism of the backwoods. Every line in it is graceful. Its sharp bow, indeed, seems almost designed to clear the air as well as water, so perfectly does it embrace every scientific requisite for overcoming the obstructions of the element in which it is destined to move. In these apparently frail machines, the red man, aided by a single paddle, will thread the quiet brook and deep running river, speed over the glassy lake like a swan, and shoot through the foaming rapids as sportively as the trout; and when the storm rages and throws the waves heavenward, and the lurid clouds seem filled with molten fire, you will see the Indian, like a spirit of the storm, at one time standing out in bold relief against the lightning-riven sky, and then disappearing in the watery gulf, rivalling the gull in the gracefulness of his movements, and rejoicing like the petrel in the confusion of the elements.

The articles used in savage life, like all the works of nature, are simple, and yet perfectly adapted to the purposes for which they are designed. The most ingenious and laborious workman, aided by the most perfect taste, cannot possibly form a vessel so general in its use, so excellent in its ends, as the calibash. The Indian finds it suspended in profusion in every glade of his forest home; spontaneous in its growth, and more effectually protected from destruction from animals, through a bitter taste, than by any artificial barrier whatever. So with all the rest of his appropriations from nature's hands. His mind scarcely ever makes an effort, and consequently seldom improves.

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The simple buffalo skin, that forms a protection for the trifles of an Indian lover when he would bear them safely across the swollen stream, compared with the gorgeous barge that conveyed Egypt's queen down the Nile to meet Antony, seems immeasurably inferior in skill and contrivance. Yet the galley of Cleopatra, with all its gay trappings and its silken sails glittering in the sun, was as far inferior to a "ship of the line" as the Indian's rude bundle to the barge of Cleopatra. Imagination may go back to some early period, when the naked Phœnician spotted upon a floating log; may mark his progress, as the inviting waters of the Mediterranean prompted him to more adventurous journeys; and in time see him astonishing his little world, by fearlessly navigating about the bays, and coasting along the whole length of his native home. How many ages after this was it, that the invading fleets of classic Greece—proud fleets, indeed, on which the gods themselves were interested—were pulled ashore as now the fisherman secures his little skiff? Admire the proud battle-ship riding upon the waves, forming a safe home for thousands, now touching the clouds with its sky-reaching masts, and then descending safely into the deep. With what power and majesty does it dash the intruding waves from its prow, and rush on in the very teeth of the winds! Admire it as the wonder of human skill; then go back through the long cycle of years, and see how many centuries have elapsed in thus perfecting it; then examine the most elaborate craft of our savage life, and the antiquity of their youth will be impressed upon you.

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PICTURES OF BUFFALO HUNTING.

THE buffalo is decidedly one of the noblest victims that is sacrificed to the ardour of the sportsman. There is a massiveness about his form, and a magnificence associated with his home, that give him a peculiar interest. No part of North America was originally unoccupied by the buffalo. Where are now cities and towns, is remembered as their haunts; but they have kept with melancholy strides before the "march of civilization," and now find a home, daily more exposed and invaded, only on that division of our continent west of the Mississippi. In the immense wilds that give birth to the waters of the Missouri, on the vast prairies that stretch out like inland seas between the "great lakes" and the Pacific, and extend towards the tropics until they touch the foot of the Cordilleras, the buffalo roams still wild and free. Yet the day of his glory is past. The Anglo-Saxon, more wanton of place than the savage himself, possessed of invincible courage and unlimited resources, and feeling adventure a part of life itself, has already penetrated the remotest fastnesses, and wandered over the most extended plains. Where the live lightning leaps from rock to rock, opening yawning caverns to the dilating eye, or spends its fury upon the desert, making it a sheet of fire, there

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have been his footsteps, and there has the buffalo smarted beneath his prowess, and kissed the earth.

The child of fortune from the "old world," the favourite of courts, has abandoned his home and affections, and sought, among these western wilds, the enjoyment of nature in her own loveliness. The American hunter frolics over them as a boy enjoying his Saturday sport. The Indian, like his fathers, never idle, scours the mountain and the plain; and men of whatever condition here meet *equal, as sportsmen*, and their great feats of honour and of arms are at the sacrifice of the buffalo.

In their appearance, the buffalos present a singular mixture of the ferocious and comical. At a first glance they excite mirth; they appear to be the sleek-blooded kine, so familiar to the farm-yard, muffled about the shoulders in a coarse shawl, and wearing a mask and beard, as if in some outlandish disguise. Their motions, too, are novel. They dash off, tail up, shaking their great woolly heads, and planting their feet under them, with a swinging gait and grotesque precision, that suggests the notion, that they are a jolly set of dare-devils, fond of fun and extravagances, and disposed to have their jokes at the expense of all dignity of carriage, and the good opinion of the grave portion of the world. Upon nearer examination, you quail before the deep destructive instinct expressed in the eye; the shaggy mane distends, and shows the working of muscles fairly radiant with power; the fore-foot dashes into the hard turf, and furrows it, as if yielding water; the tail waves in angry curves; the eyeballs fill

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with blood, and with bellowing noise that echoes like the thunder, the white foam covers the shaggy jaws. Then the huge form grows before you into a mountain, then is animal sublimity before you, a world of appetite without thought, and force without reason.

Standing on one of the immense prairies of the "south-west," you look out upon what seems to be the green waving swell of the sea, suddenly congealed, and it requires but little fancy to imagine, when the storm-cloud sweeps over it, and the rain dashes in torrents against it, and the fierce winds bear down upon it, that the magic that holds it immovable may be broken, and leave you helpless on the billowy wave. On such an expanse, sublime from its immensity, roams the buffalo, in numbers commensurate with the extent, not unfrequently covering the landscape, until their diminishing forms mingle in the opposite horizons, like mocking spectres. Such is the arena of sport, and such in quantity is the game.

To the wild Indian the buffalo hunt awakens the soul as absorbingly as the defying yell on the war-path. With inflated nostril and distended eye, he dashes after his victim, revelling in the fruition of all the best hopes of his existence, and growing in his conceits of his favour with the "Great Spirit." To the rude white hunter, less imaginative than the savage, the buffalo hunt is the high consummation of his habit and power to destroy. It gratifies his ambition, and feasts his appetite; his work is tangible; he feels, hears, tastes, and sees it; it is the very un-

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loosing of all the rough passions of our nature, with the conscience entirely at rest. To the "sportsman," who is matured in the constraint of cities and in the artificial modes of enlightened society, and who retains within his bosom the leaven of our coarser nature, the buffalo hunt stirs up the latent fires repressed by a whole life; they break out with an ardour, and he enters into the chase with an abandonment, that, while it gratifies every animal sense possessed by the savage and hunter, opens a thousand other avenues of high enjoyment known only to the cultivated and refined mind.

INDIAN BUFFALO HUNTERS.

Among the Indians there are but few ways to kill the buffalo; yet there are tribes who display more skill than others, and seem to bring more intellect to bear in the sport. The Cumanches in the south, and the Sioux in the north, are, from their numbers, warlike character, and wealth, among the aborigines, *the buffalo hunters*. The Cumanches in winter inhabit one of the loveliest countries in the world. While their summer haunts are covered with snow, and desolated with storm, they are travelling over the loveliest herbage, variegated with a thousand perfumed flowers, that yield fragrance under the crush of the foot. The wide savannas, that are washed by the Trinity and Brasos rivers, are everywhere variegated with clumps of live oak trees, among which you involuntarily look for the mansion of some feudal lord. Here are realized al-

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most the wildest dreams of the future to the red man; and here the Cumanches, strong in numbers, and rich in the spontaneous productions of their native land, walk proud masters, and exhibit savage life in some of the illusive charms we throw around it while bringing a refined imagination to view such life in the distance. Thousands of this tribe of Indians will sometimes be engaged at one time in a buffalo hunt. In their wanderings about the prairies, they will leave trails, worn like a long-travelled road. Following the "scouts," until the vicinity of the animal is proclaimed, and then selecting a halting place, favourable for fuel and water, the ceremonies preparatory to a hunt take place. Then are commenced, with due solemnity, the prayers of the priests. The death-defying warrior, who curls his finger in his scalp-lock in derision before his enemies, bows in submission to the Invisible presence that bestows on the red man the great game he is about to destroy. The fastings, prayers, and self-sacrifices being finished, the lively excitement of the chase commences.

The morning sun greets the hunter divested of all unnecessary clothing, *his arrows numbered*, his harness in order; a plume floats from his crown, his long hair streams down his back, his well-trained horse, as wild as himself, anticipates the sport, and paws with impatience the ground. Far, far in the horizon are moving about, in black masses, the game; and with an exulting whoop, a party starts off *with the wind*, dash across the prairie, and are soon out of sight.

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The buffalo is a wary animal; unwieldy as he appears, he has a quick motion, and he takes the alarm, and at the approach of a human being, instinctively flies. An hour or two may elapse, when the distant masses of buffalo begin to move. There is evident alarm spreading through the ranks. Suddenly they fly! Then it is that thousands of fleet and impatient horsemen, like messengers of the wind, dash off *and meet the herds.* The party first sent out are pressing them in the rear; confusion seizes upon the alarmed animals, and they scatter in every direction over the plain. Now the hunters select their victims, and the blood is up. On speeds the Indian and his horse. The long mane mingles with the light garments of the rider, and both seem instigated by the same instinct and spirit. On plunges the unwieldy object of pursuit, shaking his shaggy head, as if in despair of his safety. The speed of the horse soon overtakes the buffalo. The rider, dropping his rein, plucks an arrow from his quiver, presses his knees to the horse's sides, draws his bow, and with unerring aim, drives the delicate shaft into the vitals of the huge animal, who rushes on a few yards, curls his tail upwards, falters, falls on his face, and dies. An exulting shout announces the success, and the warrior starts off after another; and if he has performed his task well, *every bow that has twanged* marks the ownership of a huge carcass upon the sea of the prairie, as sacredly as the waiffe of the whaleman his victim on the sea itself. Thus, when the day's sport is over, every arrow is returned to its owner. If two have been used to kill

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the same animal, or any are wanting, having been carried away in mere flesh wounds, the want of skill is upbraided, and the unfortunate hunter shrinks from the sarcasms and observation of the successful with shame.

Following the hunter are the women, the labourers of the tribe. To them is allotted the task of tearing off the skin, selecting the choice pieces of flesh, and preserving what is not immediately consumed. Then follows the great feast. The Indian gluts himself with marrow and fatness, his eyes so bright with the fire of sport are glazed with bestiality, and he spends days and nights in wasteful extravagance, trusting to the abundance of nature to take care of the future. Such are the general characteristics of the buffalo hunt; and the view applies with equal truth to all the different tribes who pursue, as a distinct and powerful people, this noble game.

An Indian armed for the buffalo hunt, and his horse, form two of the most romantic and picturesque of beings. The little dress he wears is beautifully arranged about his person, disclosing the muscles of the shoulder and chest. Across his back is slung his quiver of arrows, made from the skin of some wild animal; his long bow, slightly arched by the sinewy string, is used gracefully as a rest to his extended arm. The horse, with a fiery eye, a mane that waves over his front like drapery and falls in rakish masses across his wide forehead, a sweeping tail ornamented with the brilliant plumage of tropical birds, champs on his rude bit, and arches his

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neck with impatience, as the scent of the game reaches his senses. Frequently will the two pass along, the rider's body thrown back, and the horse bounding gracefully along, as if in emulation of the equestrians portrayed upon the Elgin marbles. Then they may be seen dashing off with incredible swiftness, a living representation of the centaur; and as one of these wild horses and wilder men, viewed from below, stand in broad relief against the clear sky, you see a living statue that art has not accomplished. The exultation of such a warrior, in the excitement of a buffalo hunt, rings in silvery tones across the plain, as if in his lungs was the music of a "well-chosen pack;" the huge victims of pursuit, as they hear it, impel on their bodies with redoubled speed, as if they knew there was a hurricane of death in the cry.

A HUNTING-PARTY.

Take a hunting-party of fifty "warriors," starting on a buffalo hunt. Imagine a splendid fall morning in the southern part of the buffalo "grounds." The sun rises over the prairie, like a huge illuminated ball; it struggles on through the mists, growing gradually brighter in its ascent, breaking its way into the clear atmosphere in long reaching rays, dispelling the mists in wreathing columns, and starting up currents of air to move them sportively about; slowly they ascend and are lost in the ether above. You discover before you, and under you, a rich and beautifully variegated carpet, crowded with and

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enamelled by a thousand flowers, glistening with the pearly drops of dew, as the horizontal rays of the sun reach them. Here and there are plants of higher growth, as if some choice garden had been stripped of its enclosures: shrubbery waves the pendant blossom, and wastes a world of sweetness on the desert air. Among these flowery coverts will be seen browsing the graceful deer and antelope. Far before you are the long dark lines of the buffalo. In the centre of the group feed the cows and calves. Upon the outside are the sturdy bulls: some, with their mouths to the ground, are making it shake with their rough roar; others sportively tear up the turf with their horns; others, not less playful, are rushing upon each other's horns with a force that sends them reeling to the ground. Animal enjoyment seems rife, as they turn their nostrils upwards and snuff in the balmy air and greet the warm sun, little dreaming that around them are circling the sleek Indian, wilder, more savage, and more wary than themselves.

Fancy these Indians, prompted by all the habits and feelings of the hunter and warrior, mingling in the sport the desire to distinguish themselves, as on a field of honour, little less only in importance than the war-path. With characters of high repute to sustain, or injured reputations to build up, of victory for the ear of love, of jealousy, of base passions, and a thirst of blood, and you will have some idea of the promptings of the hearts of those about to engage in the chase.

The time arrives. The parties already out are driving the herd towards the starting-place of the war-

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riors. They have sent up their war-cry in one united whoop, that has startled the feeding monsters, as if the lightning had fallen among them. With a fearful response, they shake their heads, and simultaneously start off. The fearful whoop meets them at every point. Confusion seizes upon the herd. The sport has begun. In every direction you see the unequal chase; the Indians seem multiplied into hundreds; the plain becomes dotted over with the dying animals, and the whoop rings in continuous shouts upon the air, as if the fiends themselves were loose.

Now you see a single warrior: before him is rushing a buffalo which shows, from his immense size, that he was one of the masters of the herd: his pursuer is a veteran hunter, known far and near for his prowess. Yonder go some twenty buffalos of every size, pursued by three or four tyros, yet who know not the art of separating their victim from the herd. Yonder goes a bull, twice shot at, yet only wounded in the flesh: some one will have to gather wood with the women for his want of skill. There goes an old chief: his leggins are trimmed with the hair of twenty scalps, taken from the heads of the very Indians on whose grounds he was hunting buffalo: he is a great warrior; he sings that his bow unbent is a great tree that he alone can bend. See the naked arm, and the ridgid muscles, as he draws the arrow to the *very head:* the bull vomits blood, and falls: beyond him, on the grass, is the arrow; it passed through where a rifle ball would have stopped and flattened, ere it had made half the journey. Here are two buffalo bulls side by side; they make

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the earth tremble by their measured tread; their sides are reeking with sweat. Already have they been singled out. Approaching them are two horsemen; upon the head of one glistens the silvery hair of age; the small leggins also betray the old man: the other is just entering the prime of life; every thing about him is sound, full, and sleek. The eyes of one dance with excitement, the blood flows quickly through the dark skin, and gives a feverish look to the lip and cheek. The other, the old man, has his mouth compressed into a mere line; the eye is open and steady as a basilisk, the skin inanimate. What a tale is told in these differences of look! how one seems reaching into the future, and the other going back to the past! He of the flushed cheek touches his quiver, the bow is bent, the arrow speeds its way and penetrates its victim. The old man, he too takes an arrow, slowly he places it across his bow, then bending it as if to make its ends meet, he leans forward—sends the arrow home—the bull falls, while the first wounded one pursues his way. The old man gives a taunting shout, as the token of his success. The young warrior, confused by his want of skill, and alarmed lest his aged rival should complete the work he so bunglingly began, unguardedly presses too near the bull, who, smarting with his wound, turns upon his heels, and, with one mad plunge, tears out the bowels of the steed, and rolls him and rider on the ground. He next rushes at the rider. The Indian, as wary as the panther, springs aside, and the bull falls headlong on the ground. Ere he recovers himself the bow is again bent, the

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flint-headed arrow strikes the hard rib, splits it asunder, and enters the heart. The old warrior has looked on with glazed eye and expressionless face. The young man feels that he has added no laurels to his brow, for an arrow has been spent in vain, and his steed killed under him.

There goes a "brave" with a bow by his side, and his right hand unoccupied. He presses his horse against the very sides of the animal which he is pursuing. Now he leans forward until he seems hidden between the buffalo and his horse. He rises; a gory arrow is in his hand; he has plucked it from a "flesh wound" at full speed, and while in luck has, with better aim, brought his victim to the earth. The sun is now fairly in its zenith: the buffalos that have escaped are hurrying away, with a speed that will carry them miles beyond the hunter's pursuit. The Indians are coming in from the field. The horses breathe hard, and are covered with foam. The faces of the Indians are still lit up with excitement, that soon will pass away, and leave them cold and expressionless. The successful hunters spare not the gibe and joke at the expense of the unfortunate. Slowly they wend their way back to "the encampment;" their work is done.

The squaws, who, like vultures, have been following in the rear, have already commenced their disgusting work. The maiden is not among them; slavery commences only with married life; but the old, the wrinkled, the viragoes and vixens, are tearing off the skins, jerking the meat, gathering together the marrow-bones, and the humps, the tongues, and

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the pouch; and before the sun has fairly set, they are in the camp with the rewards of the day's hunt.

The plain, so beautiful in the morning, is scattered over with bodies already offensive with decay; the grass is torn up, the flowers destroyed, and the wolf and buzzard and the carrion-crow are disputing for the loathsome meal, while their already gorged appetites seem bursting with repletion.

OUR FIRST BUFFALO STEAK.

On the confines of the buffalo hunting-grounds, migrated a family, consisting of a strange mixture of enterprise and idleness, of ragged-looking men and homely women. They seemed to have all the bad habits of the Indians, with none of their redeeming qualities. They were willing to live without labour, and subsist upon the bounties of nature. Located in the fine climate of Northern Texas, the whole year was to them little else than a continued spring, and the abundance of game with which they were surrounded afforded what seemed to them all the comforts of life. The men never exerted themselves except when hunger prompted, or a spent magazine made the acquisition of "peltries" necessary to barter for powder and ball. A more lazy, contemptible set of creatures never existed, and we would long since have forgotten them, had not our introduction to them associated itself with *our first buffalo steak.*

It was a matter of gratulation to my companions as well as myself, that, after sleeping on the open

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prairies, over which we had been travelling for many days, we discovered ahead of us what evinced the location of a "squatter." A thousand recollections of the comforts of civilized life pressed upon us before we reached the abode. We speculated upon the rich treat of delicacies which we should enjoy. A near inspection at once dispelled our illusions. A large rudely-constructed shed, boarded up on the northern side, was all we found. Upon nearer examination, it appeared that this "shed" was the common dwelling-place of the people described above, with the addition of two cows, several goats, poultry, and, as we soon after discovered, three horses. Immediately around the caravansera the prairie grass struggled for a sickly growth. As you entered it, you found yourself growing deeper and deeper in a fine dust, that had been in the course of time worked out of the soil. Some coarse blankets were suspended through the enclosure, as retiring rooms for the women. On the ground were strewn buffalo skins, from which the animal inhabitants kept aloof. We entered without seeing a human being. After some delay, however, a little nondescript, with a white sunburnt head, thrust aside the blankets, and hallooed out, "They ain't injuns." The mother then showed herself. She was as far removed from feminine as possible, and appeared as unmoved at our presence as the post that sustained the roof of her house. We asked for lodging and food; she nodded a cold assent and disappeared. Not disposed to be fastidious, we endeavoured to make ourselves as comfortable as possible, and wait for the develope-

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ment of coming events. In the course of an hour a woman younger than the first made her appearance, somewhat attractive because younger. On hearing the detail of our wants, she wrinkled her soiled visage into a distorted smile, and told us that the "men" would soon be home with "buffalo meat," and then our wants should be attended to.

Whatever might have been our disappointment at what we saw around us, the name of buffalo meat dispelled it all. The great era in our frontier wanderings was about to commence, and with smiles from our party that for expression would have done credit to rival belles, we lounged upon the skins upon the ground. It is needless for us to say what were our ideas of the "men," soon to make their appearance. Buffalo hunters of course, tall, fine-looking fellows, active as cats, mounted upon wild steeds, armed with terrible rifles, and all the paraphernalia of the hunter's art. The Dutch angels, that figure so conspicuously on many a gem of art in the "Lowlands," are certainly not farther removed from the beautiful creations of Milton, than were the buffalo hunters that we saw from the standard our imagination and reading had conjured up.

Two short, ill-formed men, with bow-legs, long bodies, and formidable shocks of red hair, destitute of intelligence, clothed in skins, and moving with shuffling gaits, were the realities of our conceptions. Whatever might have been the charms of their faces, our admiration was absorbed in viewing their nether garments. They were made of undressed deer-skin, the hair worn outside. When first made, they were

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of the length of pantaloons, but the drying qualities of the sun had, in course of time, no doubt imperceptibly to the wearers, shortened them into the dignity of breeches. To see these worthies standing up was beyond comparison ridiculous. They seemed to have had immense pummels fastened to their knees and seats. Under other circumstances, the tailor craft of the frontier would have elicited great merriment; but a starving stomach destroys jokes. Courtesies suitable were exchanged, and the preliminaries for a hearty meal agreed upon, the basis of which was to be *buffalo steaks*.

A real buffalo steak! eaten in the very grounds which the animal inhabits! What romance! what a diploma of a sportsman's enterprise! Whatever might have been my disappointment in the hunters, I knew that meat was meat, and that the immutable laws of nature would not fail, though my notions of the romantic in men were entirely disappointed. A promise that our wants should soon be supplied brought us to that unpleasant time, in every-day life, that prefaces an expected and wished-for meal. Seated, like barbarians, upon the floor, myself and companions had the pleasing mental operation of calculating how little the frontier family we were visiting were worth for any moral quality, and the physical exercise of keeping off, as much as possible, thousands of fleas and other noxious insects that composed part of the dust in which we sat. While thus disposed of, the "hunters" were busy in various ways about the premises, and received from us the elegant names of "Bags" and "Breeches," from some

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fancied or real difference in their inexpressibles. "Breeches," who was evidently the business man, came near where we were sitting, and threw down upon the ground, what appeared, at a superficial glance, to be an enormous pair of saddle-bags. He then asked his companion in arms for a knife, to cut off the strangers some buffalo steaks. Now if the nondescript before me had as coolly proposed to cut steaks off an ill-natured cur that was wistfully eyeing the saddle-bags, no more surprise could have been exhibited by my companions than was, when they heard the suggestion.

The knife was brought, and "Breeches" made an essay at cutting up the saddle-bags, which gave him, dressed as he was in skins, the appearance of a wild robber just about to search the effects of some murdered traveller. The work progressed bravely, and, to our surprise, soon were exhibited crude slices of meat. What we saw was the fleshy parts of a buffalo's hams, ingeniously connected together by the skin that passed over the back of the animal, and so dissected from the huge frame as to enable it easily to be brought "into camp." As the sounds that accompany the frying of meat saluted our ears, we moved into the open air, to avoid the certain knowledge that we were about to complete the eating of the peck of dirt, said to be necessary before we die. Before the door were the two horses belonging to our hosts, just as they returned from the hunt, and upon one still reposed the huge pieces of meat, thus simply, and frontier-like, held together for transportation.

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Our first buffalo steak disappointed us. The romance of months and of years was sadly broken in upon. The squalid wretchedness of those who administered to our wants made rebellious even our hungry stomachs, and we spent our first night of real disappointment on the great prairies, under circumstances which we thought, before our sad experience, would have afforded us all the substantial food for body and mind that we could have desired.

OUR FIRST BUFFALO HUNT.

The morning following the adventure with the steak found our little party, rifles in hand, and bent upon a buffalo hunt. The animals, it would seem, for the especial benefit of "Breeches" and "Bags," had come "lower down" than usual, and we were among the animals much sooner than we expected to be. So far fortune favoured us; and a gayer party never set out on a frolic than followed the deer-skin inexpressibles on the fine December morning to which we allude. As we jaunted along, crushing a thousand wild flowers under our horses' feet, the deer would bound like visions of grace and beauty from our presence; but we essayed not such small game. Our ideas and nostrils expanded, and we laughed so loud at the merry conceit of a man drawing a deadly weapon on a helpless thing as small as a woodcock, that the wild half devil and half Indian horses on which we were mounted pricked up their ears and tails, as if they expected

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the next salute would be the war-whoop and a fight. Ahead of us we beheld the buzzard circling in groups, whirling down in aerial flights to the earth, as if busy with their prey. We passed them at their gross repast over a mountain of meat that had, the day before, been full of life and fire, but had fallen under the visitation of our guides and scarecrows, and provided the very steaks that had met with so little affection from our appetites. Soon we discovered signs of immediate vicinity of the buffalo, and on a little examination from the top of a "swell of land," we saw them feeding off towards the horizon, like vast herds of cattle, quietly grazing within the enclosure of the farm-yard. As far off as they were, our hearts throbbed violently as we contemplated the sanguinary warfare we were about to engage in, and the waste of life that would ensue. Still we were impelled on by an irresistible and overpowering instinct to begin the hunt.

Breeches and Bags carried, over their shoulders, poles about six feet long; but as they were destitute of any spear, we looked upon them as inoffensive weapons, and concluded they had come out just to act as guides. In fact we could not imagine that such beastly-looking fellows, so badly mounted, could hunt any thing. For ourselves, we were armed with the terrible rifle, and so satisfied were we of its prowess, that we thought the very appearance of its muzzle more deadly than the rude implement of warfare used by the Indians.

Keeping to the windward of the buffalo, we skirted round until we got them between us and the shed

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wherein we passed the night. Then the signal was given, and in a pellmell manner we charged on, every man for himself. We approached within a quarter of a mile before the herd took the alarm. Then, smelling us on the air, they turned their noses towards the zenith, gave a sort of rough snort, and broke simultaneously off at a full gallop. As soon as this noise was heard by our horses, they increased their speed, and entered into the sport as ardently as their riders. The rough beasts rode by Bags and Breeches did wonders, and seemed really to fly, while their riders poised themselves gallantly, carrying their long poles in front of them with a grace that would have done honour to a Cossack bearing his spear.

The buffalo, with their tails high in the air, ran close together, rattling their horns singularly loud; while the horses, used to the chase, endeavoured to separate a single object for pursuit. This once accomplished, it was easy to range alongside, and in this situation the members of our party severally found themselves, and drawing deadly aim, as they supposed, the crack of the sharp rifle was heard over the prairies, and yet nothing was brought to the ground. Contrary to all this, a noble bull lay helpless in the very track I took, the fruit of Breeches' skill, and from the energetic manner he pressed on, we became satisfied that there was a magic in those sticks we had not dreamed of. Our curiosity excited, we ran across the diameter of a circle he was forming and came by his side. Soon he overtook his object of pursuit, and thrusting forward his pole,

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we saw glittering, for the first time, on its end a short blade; a successful thrust *severed the hamstring*, and a mountain of flesh and life fell helpless on the prairie. The thing was done so suddenly, that some moments elapsed before we could overcome our astonishment. My horse approached the animal and thrusting forward his head and ears muted in his face, and then commenced quietly cropping the grass. It would be impossible for me to describe my emotions as I, dismounting, examined the gigantic and wounded bull before me. There he lay, an animal, that from his singular expression of face and general appearance, joined with his immense size, looked like some animated specimen of the monsters of the antediluvian world. Rising on his fore legs, with his hind ones under him, he shook his mane and beard in defiance, and flashed from his eyes an unconquerable determination that was terrible to behold. His small delicate hoofs were associated in our minds with the farm-yard and the innocent pleasures of rural life. Gazing upwards, we beheld, fearfully caricatured, the shaggy trappings of the lion, and the wild fierceness of a perfect savage, the whole rising above us in huge unwieldly proportions. Making no demonstration of attack, the expression of defiance altered into that of seeming regret and heartsick pain; his small bright eye appeared to roam over the beautiful prairie, and to watch the retreating herds of his fellows, as would an old patriarch when about to bid adieu to the world; and as he looked on, the tear struggled in his eye, rolled over the rough sunburnt hair of his

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face, dashed like a bright jewel upon his knotted beard, and fell to the ground. This exhibition of suffering nature cooled the warm blood of the hunt within me; the instinct of destruction was for the time overpowered by that of better feelings, and could we have restored to health the wounded animal, it would have given us a thrill of real pleasure to have seen him bounding over the plain, again free. Instead of this, we took from our belt a pistol, called upon mercy to sanction our deed, and sent the cold lead through the thoughtful eye into the brain: the body sank upon its knees, in ready acknowledgment of the power of man; the heavy head plunged awkwardly to the ground; a tremulous motion passed through the frame—and it was dead.

The momentary seriousness of my own feelings, occasioned by the incidents above related, was broken in upon by a loud exulting whoop, prolonged into a quavering sound, such as will sometimes follow a loud blast of a trumpet at the mouth of an expert player. It was a joyous whoop, and vibrated through our hearts; we looked up, and saw just before us a young Indian warrior, mounted upon a splendid charger, rushing across the plain, evidently in pursuit of the retreating buffalo. As he swept by, he threw himself forward in his saddle, placed his right hand over his eyes, as if to shade them from the sun, making a picture of the most graceful and eager interest. His horse's head was low down, running like a rabbit, while the long flowing mane waved in the wind like silk. Horse and rider were almost equally undressed; both wiry; and every muscle, as it came into action,

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gave evidence of youth and power. Over the horse's head, and inwrought in the hair of the tail, streamed plumes plucked from the flamingo. Every thing was life—moving, dashing life—gay as the sunshine that glistens on the rippling wave where the falcon wets his wing. This soul-stirring exhibition warmed us into action, and, mounting our horses, we dashed after the red man. Our direction soon brought us in sight of the retreating buffalo; and, with the Indian and myself, dashed on a third person, the valiant "Breeches." I followed as a spectator, and, keeping close to both, was enabled to watch two beings so widely different in form, looks, and action, while bent on the same exciting pursuit.

Fortunately, two buffaloes, of large size, cut off from the main body, were being driven towards us by some one of our party; a distant report of a rifle, and the sudden stopping of one of the animals told its own tale. The remaining bull, alarmed by the report of the rifle, rushed madly on with enemies in front and rear. Discovering its new danger, it wheeled almost on its heels, and ran for life. Whatever might have been our most vivid imaginings of the excitement of a buffalo chase, we now felt the fruition beyond our sanguine hopes. Before us ran the buffalo, then followed the Indian, and beside him "Breeches," so closely that you would have thought a dark Apollo on a mettled charger, by some necromancy casting the shadow of a cornfield scarecrow. We soon gained on the buffalo, rapidly as he moved his feet under him. "Breeches" poised his rude instrument to make the fearful cut

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"There was a simplicity and beautiful wildness about the group, that would have struck the eye of the most insensible.—*Page* 103.

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at the hamstrings, when the Indian, plucking an arrow from his quiver, bent his bow, and pointing it at "Breeches's" side, as we thought, let it fly. The stick held by "Breeches" leaped from his grasp as if it had been struck by a club; another instant, and again the bow was bent; guiding his horse with his feet, he came alongside of the buffalo, and drove the arrow to the feather into his side. A chuckling guttural laugh followed this brilliant exploit, and as the animal after a few desperate leaps fell forward and vomited blood, again was repeated the same joyous whoop that roused our stagnant blood at the beginning of the chase.

The instant that "Breeches" dropped his stick, his horse, probably from habit, stopped, and the one I rode followed the example. The Indian dismounted and stood beside the buffalo the instant he fell. There was a simplicity and beautiful wildness about the group that would have struck the eye of the most insensible. The shaggy and rough appearance of the dead animal, the healthy-looking and ungroomed horse with his roving eye and long mane, and the Indian himself, contemplating his work like some bronze statue of antique art. "Breeches," alike insensible to the charms of the tailor's art, and the picturesque, handed the Indian his first fired arrow, and then stooping down, with a gentle pressure, thrust the head of the one in the buffalo's body through the opposite side, from which it entered, and handed it to its owner, with disgust marked upon his face, that displayed no great pleasure at his appearance and company.

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Among the Indian tribes, there are certain styles of doing things which are as essential to command the attention and win the favour of a real hunter as there are peculiar manners and modes commended, and only acknowledged by sportsmen. A poor despicable tribe, bearing the name of Ta-wa-ki-na, inhabiting the plains of Texas, kill the buffalo by hamstringing them, and are, therefore, despised and driven out from among "Indian men." A young Cumanche chief, fond of adventure, and friendly with "Breeches," had gone out of his way to join in our sport; and having shown to the white man his skill, and for Breeches his contempt for his imitations of a despised tribe, he passed on in pursuit of his own business, either of war or of pleasure.

HAMSTRINGING THE BUFFALO.

The experience of our first buffalo-hunt satisfied us that the rifle was not the most effective instrument in destroying the animal. The time consumed in loading the rifle is sufficient for an Indian to shoot several arrows, while the arrow more quickly kills than the bullet. As the little party to which I was attached had more notions of fun than any particular method of hunting, a day was set apart for a buffalo hunt, "Ta-wa-ki-na fashion," and for this purpose rifles were laid aside, and poles about seven feet long, with razor blades fastened on them a few inches from the end, so as to form a fork, were taken in their place. Arriving in the vicinity of the buffalo, those who were disposed entered into the sport

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pellmell. Like a faithful squire I kept close at the heels of "Breeches," who soon brought a fine young heifer bellowing to the ground. As the animal uttered sounds of pain, one or two fierce-looking bulls that gallantly followed in the rear, exposing themselves to attack to preserve the weaker members of the herd, stopped short for an instant, and eyed us with most unpleasant curiosity. This roused the knight of the deer skin, Breeches, and brandishing his stick over his head with a remarkable degree of dexterity, he dashed off as if determined to slay both at once. My two companions who started out, Ta-wa-ki-nas, had done but little execution, not understanding their work, or alarmed at so near an approach of the animals they wounded, without bringing them to the earth. As "Breeches" dashed on after the bulls, he severally crossed the route of all who were on the chase; and as he was unquestionably the hero of the day, all followed in his train, determined to see hamstringing done scientifically.

It is a singular fact in the formation of the buffalo, and the familiar cattle of the farm-yard, that, although so much alike in general appearance, the domesticated animals will, after being hamstrung, run long distances. The buffalo, on the contrary, the moment the tendon is severed, falls to the ground entirely helpless, and perfectly harmless beyond the reach of its horns. A very short chase in company with "Breeches" brought us up to one of the bulls; he poised his stick, thrust it forward, and the *tendo Achillis*, full of life and full of action, was touched by the sharp blade; its tension, as it sustained the

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immense bull in his upward leaps, made it, when severed, spring back as will the breaking string of the harp; and the helpless beast, writhing in pain, came to the ground. One of our party witnessing this exhibition, gave an exulting shout, and declared he would bring a buffalo down, or break his neck; he soon came beside a venerable bull, and as he made repeated thrusts, a thousand directions were given as to the manner of proceeding. The race was a well-contested one, the heels of the pursued animal were strangely accelerated by the thrusts made at him in his rear. A lunge was finally accomplished by the "Ta-wa-ki-na," that almost threw him from his horse; the fearful cut brought the huge bull directly under the rider's feet; the next instant the noble steed was impaled upon the buffalo's horns, and the unfortunate rider lay insensible on the ground. The wrong hamstring, in the excitement, had been cut, the animal *always falling on the wounded side.* We hastened to our unfortunate companion, chafed his temples, and brought him to his senses. The first question he asked was, "where-abouts the buffalo struck him." Happily, save the loss of a generous steed, no great damage was done. The "Ta-wa-ki-na" acknowledged hamstringing buffalo was as contemptible as it was thought to be by the Cumanche chief. Thus ended this novel and barbarian hunt, that afforded incidents for many rough jokes, and amusing reflections on hamstringing buffaloes.

As a reward for these frontier sports, it is but just to say that we feasted plentifully upon buffalo steaks,

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marrow bones, humps, and tongues, yet we were not satisfied. There was a waste of life and of food accompanying the hunting of the animal, that, like an ever-present spirit of evil, took away from our enjoyment that zest which is necessary to make it a favourite sport.

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SCENES ON THE MISSISSIPPI.

It has been the policy of the United States government to remove the Indians west of the Mississippi. There, there is still a vast extent of country unoccupied, in which he can pursue, comparatively unrestrained, his inclinations, and pluck a few more days of happiness before his sun entirely sets. Occasionally may be seen in the south-west a large body of these people, under the charge of a "government officer," going to their new homes provided for them by their "white father." These "removals" are always melancholy exhibitions. The Indians, dispirited and heart-broken, entirely unconscious of the future, with dogged looks, submit to every privation that is imposed on them, and appear equally indifferent as to the receipt of favours. Throwing aside every mark of etiquette among themselves, the chief, who, among their native haunts, is almost a sacred person, lies down, or takes food promiscuously with the noblest or most degraded of his people; all distinctions of ages, as well as caste, are thrown aside, and they seem a mere mass of degraded humanity, with less seeming capability of self-preservation than the brute.

Some two or three years ago, we took passage on board of a boat bound from New Orleans to St. Louis, which boat the government had engaged to

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carry, as far towards their place of destination as practicable, near four hundred Seminoles, who with their chiefs had agreed to emigrate west of the Mississippi. We were not particularly pleased with our numerous and novel passengers, but the lateness of the season lessened the chances of getting a boat, and as most of the Indians were to remain in a tender, lashed to the side of the steamer, we concluded that a study of their manners and habits would beguile away the time of a long trip, and thus pay us for the inconveniences we might be put to. Unfortunately the novelty of our situation too soon passed away. The Indians, who on first acquaintance kept up a little display of their original character, gradually relapsed into what appeared to be a mere vegetable existence, and slept through the entire twenty-four hours of the day. Of all the remarkable traits of character that dignify them in history, we could not discern the least trace; yet, among the brutal, insensible savages at our feet, were many daring spirits, who had displayed in their warfare with the whites dangerous talents, and taken many a bloody scalp. The girls were possessed of little or no personal charms, while the women, the labourers of the tribe, were as hideous as any hags that can be imagined.

The heat of the weather and the confinement of the boat had a dreadful effect on these poor wretches; sickness rapidly broke out among them, and as they stoutly refused to take the white man's medicine, their chances of recovery were poor indeed. The tender was turned into a perfect lazar-house, and

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nothing could be seen but the affecting attentions of the old squaws to their friends and relatives, as they wasted away before their eyes. The infant and patriarch lay side by side, consuming with slow fever, while the corpse of some middle-aged person lay at their feet, waiting for the funeral rites and the obscurity of the grave. Vain were the prescriptions of the "medicine man" of their tribe, he blew his breath through a gaudy coloured reed upon the faces of his patients, and recited his incantations without success. He disfigured his person with new paint, and altered his devices daily, still his patients would die, and at every landing where the boat stopped some poor Indian was taken ashore and hastily buried. No one mourned over the corpse but the females, and they only when intimately related to the deceased. The father, son, or husband, as they saw their relatives falling around them, scarce turned their glazed eyes upon the dead, and if they did, it was only to exclaim in guttural accents, "Ugh!" and then turn away to sleep. Not an article belonging to the dead but was wrapped up with it or placed in the coffin; the infant and his playthings, the young girl and her presents, the squaw with her domestic utensils, and the "brave" with his gun and whatever property there was in his possession. A beautiful custom, indeed; one that brings no crocodile tears to the eyes of the living heir, or gives the lawyer a chance for litigation.

Among those who died was one old veteran warrior, who had particularly attracted our attention by his severe looks and loneliness of habit, and we

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watched attentively his exit from the world. He seemed, as near as we could judge, to have no relatives about him; no one noticed him but the doctor, who was markedly attentive. The old man was a chief, and the scars that covered his body told of many a dreadful encounter with man and beast. His huge skeleton, as he moved about in his ill-concealed agony, looked like the remains of a giant, exaggerated by its want of flesh. His hands were small, and of feminine delicacy, occasionally he would move them about in mute eloquence, then clutch at the air, as if in pursuit of an enemy, and then fall back exhausted. Recovering from one of these fits, he tried to stand, but found it impossible, he got however upon his elbow, and opening his eyes for the first time in a long while, stared wildly about him. A smile lit up his features, his lips moved, and he essayed to speak. The sun, which was at this time low in the west, shone full upon him, his smooth skin glistened like burnished copper, his long-neglected hair, of silvery whiteness, hung over his head and face, while the scalp-lock displayed itself by its immense length, as it reached his shoulder. His muscles, shrunken by age and disease, moved like cords in performing their offices. A very old man was dying. As his mouth opened a faint chant was heard, the doctor, at the sound, bent his head, and assumed an air of reverence. The chant, as it continued to swell on the evening breeze, reached the ears of the slumbering warriors that lay about, and as they listened to the sounds, I could discern their sottish eyes open and flash with

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unearthly fires, sometimes exhibiting pleasure, but oftener ferocity and hatred. The old man sang on, a few raised to their feet, and waved their hands in the air, as if keeping time, and occasionally some aged Indian would repeat the sounds he heard. The old man ceased, turned his face full to the setting sun, and fell back a corpse. The Indians cast a look in the direction of their homes, gave an expression of malignity, as well as sorrow, and then silently and sluggishly sank into repose, as if nothing had happened. "That old fellow brags well of his infernal deeds," observed one of the white men accompanying the Indians, "and the red skinned devils about here drink it in as a Cuba hound would blood."

The intense heat of the weather, and the quietness that reigned so profoundly among the Indians, broken only by the saw and hammer of the carpenter at the capstan, making coffins, made us sigh for a landing-place, and a separation from such melancholy scenes. This desire was encouraged from the well-known fact, that the savages grew every hour more discontented and troublesome, and the song of the dying old chief had not allayed their feelings, or made them more comfortable.

* * * * *

The morning following the death of the old chief had been preceded by one of those nights in which the fog rose from the water so thick, that, in the hyperbolical language of the boatmen, you could make feather-beds of it. The pilot had "felt his way

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along" for many hours, until the sudden crash that shook every thing in the boat, convinced us that we were aground. The engine stopped, and left us in perfect silence and obscurity. Long after our accustomed late hour of rising, we dressed and went on deck. The fresh mist blew in our faces with sickening effect, and the sun — then two hours high—was invisible. The shore, which was so near that the breaking of twigs could be heard, as cattle, or game moved about in it, was indiscernible. Even the end of the boat opposite to the one on which we stood was in obscurity. A deep, damp, opaque Mississippi river fog, had swallowed us up. As the sun continued to rise and gain strength in its ascent, its rays penetrated through the gloom, and we at last discovered it, looking about as brilliant as illuminated cheese. On it came, working its way through the fog by its rays, reaching them out as a debilitated spider would his legs, and apparently with the same caution and labour.

With the growing heat a gentle breeze sprang up, and the fog rolled about in huge masses, leaving spots of pure atmosphere, and then closing them up; gradually it became more and more rarified, and things at a distance began to appear all magnified and mysterious. On came the sun, brightening and enlarging, until his streaming rays dipped into the water, and shot up to the zenith. The fog, no longer able to keep its consistency, retired before its splendour in little clouds, which would sometimes rally, and spread over the surface of the river, then, breaking asunder, vanish away into air, with a splendour

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that rivalled the dying dolphin's tints. Now, for the first time, could we learn our whereabouts. The broad bosom of the Mississippi stretched far to the front of us, while at the stern of our boat was one of those abrupt banks that denote a sudden bend in the river. This had deceived the pilot. On our right, within a few hundred yards, lay the shore, lined with huge trees, tangled with gigantic vines, and waving with festoons of moss, giving them a sombre appearance that was singular and repulsive. Wild ducks and geese went screaming by, heron and crane innumerable would come near us, but discovering the dark form of our boat, fly precipitately away. The water glistened in the sun, and there would rise from its quiet surface little columns of mist, that would ascend high in the air and sail along on the surface of the water, until striking the distant shore, they would roll over the landscape, enveloping parts in momentary obscurity, and not until near noon did the fog entirely disappear. Then the sun, as if incensed with the veil that had for a time kept him from his scorching work, poured down its heat with more intensity, leaving a foggy day, hotter before its close, than if the sun had been unobscured in its appearance in the morn.

While sitting in the cabin, congratulating ourselves on the prospect of getting off the bar, on which we had so long been detained, the report of a rifle was heard, fired from the deck, accompanied by a loud yell. Another rifle was discharged, and a loud Indian whoop followed, that made our blood

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run cold. The ladies present turned pale, and the commanding officer who had charge of the Indians, somewhat astonished, left the cabin. A momentary alarm seized upon us all. Could the old warrior's death-song have incited mutiny! Crack! went another rifle outside, and another shout; we could stand it no longer, but rushed on deck. What a scene! Not an Indian that was able but was upon his feet, his eyes sparkling with fire, and his form looking as active as a panther's. The sluggards of yesterday were as sleek and nervous as horses at the starting post, so perfectly had a little excitement altered them. Their rifles, however, thank Heaven, were not turned upon the white man—their enemy was between the boat and the shore—in the water—in the form of a very large black bear. It was a beautiful sight to see the savage springing with a graceful bound on some high place in the boat; and raise his rifle to his eye, and before the report was heard you could mark a red furrow on the head of the bear, where it was struck by the ball as it passed its way through the skin and flesh, without entering the bone. While the bear, at these assaults, would throw himself half out of the water, brush over the smarting wound with his huge paw, and then dash on for life. Another shot, and another yell brought the bear on the defensive, and showed he was dangerously wounded. While this firing was going on, some Indians, armed only with knives, launched a canoe that lay among their movables, and paddled hurriedly out to the bear. No sooner was the canoe within his reach than he put his huge paws on its

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side, in spite of the thrusts aimed at his head, and turned his enemies, with a somerset, into the water. Loud shouts of laughter greeted this accident; the little "papooses" and women fairly danced with joy, while the crew of the boat yelled and shouted, and swore at the sport as much as the savages themselves.—The bear turned from the boat, and looked for his victims, but they were not to be seen; precipitated so suddenly into the water, they sank below the surface, like the duck when much alarmed, and then thrust out their shining polls far from the friendly hug of the bear. Laying their plans of attack at once (for the firing of rifles was suspended,) one of the Indians attracted the bear's attention, and made towards him; they met, the floating canoe between them, and while thus skirmishing, the unoccupied Indian came up behind the bear, raised his knife, and drove it deeply into his side, and then disappeared, as a lump of lead would have done about his own weight. The bear turned in the direction of this new attack, snapped and clawed in the water in the greatest agony. Another stab was given in the same way, and as the Indians again disappeared, a "white hunter," who had been looking on, rifle in hand, quite coolly, sprang upon the guards of the boat, and singing out "red devils, look out below," fired. The bear leaped entirely out of the water, fell upon his back, and after a convulsive kick or two, floated a dead body on the water. This exploit of the white man, so sudden and unexpected, was greeted by a loud shout from all parties. "You see," said the hunter, as he

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coolly laid down his rifle—"you see, the bar has feeling, stranggers, and whar is the use of tormenting the varmint? my old shooting iron never misses, but if it had hit a red skin, by accident, I should not have been ashamed of the shot—for the bar is the best of the two, and a perfect Christian, compared with the best copper skin in the tender *thar*."

The Indians in the water, at this last shot, expressed a significant "ugh," and approaching the bear, gave him repeated thrusts with their knives; that showed they thought him a hard lived and dangerous animal. In a few minutes they recovered their canoe, and were towing the dead carcass ashore. Fifty Indians at least now threw their blankets aside, and leaping into the river, swam after the bear ashore. The tearing off of the huge skin, and jerking the meat, was despatched so rapidly, that it indicated an accustomed work.

This little incident relieved the monotony, of all others the most disagreeable, that of being aground in the Mississippi, and the hours of labour which were spent in releasing the boat, passed quickly away, and by the time the Indians on shore returned to their friends in the tender, the bell sounded; we moved: and the steamer pursued its way.

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THE DISGRACED SCALP-LOCK;

OR,

INCIDENTS ON THE WESTERN WATERS.

Occasionally may be seen on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers singularly hearty-looking men, that puzzle a stranger as to their history and age. Their forms always exhibit a powerful development of muscle and bone; their cheeks are prominent, and you would pronounce them men enjoying perfect health in middle life, were it not for their heads, which, if not bald, will be sparsely covered with steel-gray hair. Another peculiarity about this people is, that they have a singular knowledge of all the places on the river; every bar and bend is spoken of with precision and familiarity; every town is recollected before it was half as large as the present, or no town at all. Innumerable places are marked out where once was an Indian fight, or a rendezvous of robbers. The manner, the language, and the dress of these individuals are all characteristic of sterling common sense—the manner modest, yet full of self-reliance; the language strong and forcible, from superiority of mind rather than from education; the dress studied for comfort, rather than fashion—on the whole, you become attached to them and court their society. The good humour, the frankness, the practical sense, the reminiscences, the powerful frame—all indicate

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a character, at the present day anomalous; and such indeed is the case, for your acquaintance will be one of the few remaining people now spoken of as the "last of the flat-boat men."

Thirty years ago the navigation of the western waters was confined to this class of men; the obstacles presented to the pursuit in those swift-running and wayward waters had to be overcome by physical force alone; the navigator's arm grew strong as he guided his rude craft past the "snag" and "sawyer," or kept off the no less dreaded "bar." Besides all this, the deep forests that covered the river banks concealed the wily Indian, who gloated over the shedding of blood. The qualities of the frontier warrior associated themselves with the boatmen, while he would, when at home, drop both these characters in the cultivator of the soil. It is no wonder, then, that they were brave, hardy, and open-handed men: their whole lives were a round of manly excitement; they were hyperbolical in thought and in deed, when most natural, compared with any other class of men. Their bravery and chivalrous deeds were performed without a herald to proclaim them to the world—they were the mere incidents of a border life, considered too common to outlive the time of a passing wonder. Obscurity has nearly obliterated the men, and their actions. A few of the former still exist, as if to justify their wonderful exploits, which now live almost exclusively as traditions.

Among the flat-boatmen there were none that gained the notoriety of *Mike Fink*. His name is still remembered along the whole of the Ohio as a man

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who excelled his fellows in every thing,—particularly in his rifle-shot, which was acknowledged to be unsurpassed. Probably no man ever lived who could compete with Mike Fink in the latter accomplishment. Strong as Hercules, free from all nervous excitement, possessed of perfect health, and familiar with his weapon from childhood, he raised the rifle to his eye, and, having once taken sight, it was as firmly fixed as if buried in a rock. It was Mike's pride, and he rejoiced on all occasions where he could bring it into use, whether it was turned against the beast of prey or the more savage Indian; and in his day these last named were the common foe with whom Mike and his associates had to contend. On the occasion that we would particularly introduce Mike to the reader, he had bound himself for a while to the pursuits of trade, until a voyage from the head-waters of the Ohio, and down the Mississippi, could be completed. Heretofore he had kept himself exclusively to the Ohio, but a liberal reward, and some curiosity, prompted him to extend his business character beyond his ordinary habits and inclinations. In accomplishment of this object, he was lolling carelessly over the big "sweep" that guided the "flat" on which he officiated; the current of the river bore the boat swiftly along, and made his labour light; his eye glanced around him, and he broke forth in ecstasies at what he saw and felt. If there is a river in the world that merits the name of beautiful, it is the Ohio, when its channel is

"Without o'erflowing, full."

The scenery is everywhere soft; there are no jut-

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ting rocks, no steep banks, no high hills; but the clear and swift current laves beautiful and undulating shores, that descend gradually to the water's edge. The foliage is rich and luxuriant, and its outlines in the water are no less distinct than when it is relieved against the sky. Interspersed along its route are islands, as beautiful as ever figured in poetry as the land of the fairies; enchanted spots indeed, that seem to sit so lightly on the water that you almost expect them, as you approach, to vanish into dreams. So late as when Mike Fink disturbed the solitudes of the Ohio with his rifle, the canoe of the Indian was hidden in the little recesses along the shore; they moved about in their frail barks like spirits; and clung, in spite of the constant encroachments of civilization, to the places which tradition had designated as the happy places of a favoured people.

Wild and uncultivated as Mike appeared, he loved nature, and had a soul that sometimes felt, while admiring it, an exalted enthusiasm. The Ohio was his favourite stream. From where it runs no stronger than a gentle rivulet, to where it mixes with the muddy Mississippi, Mike was as familiar with its meanderings as a child could be with those of a flower-garden. He could not help noticing with sorrow the desecrating hand of improvement as he passed along, and half soliloquizing, and half addressing his companions, he broke forth:—"I knew these parts afore a squatter's axe had blazed a tree; 'twasn't then pulling a —— sweep to get a living; but pulling the trigger's the business. Those were times to see; a man might call himself lucky.

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What's the use of improvements? When did cutting down trees make deer more plenty? Who ever found wild buffalo or a brave Indian in a city? Where's the fun, the frolicking, the fighting? Gone! Gone! The rifle won't make a man a living now—he must turn nigger and work. If forests continue to be used up, I may yet be smothered in a settlement. Boys, this 'ere life won't do. I'll stick to the broadhorn 'cordin' to contract; but once done with it, I'm off for a frolic. If the Choctas or Cherokees on the Massassip don't give us a brush as we pass along, I shall grow as poor as a starved wolf in a pitfall. I must, to live peaceably, point my rifle at something more dangerous than varmint. Six months and no fight would spile me worse than a dead horse on a prairie."

Mike ceased speaking. The then beautiful village of Louisville appeared in sight; the labour of landing the boat occupied his attention—the bustle and confusion that followed such an incident ensued, and Mike was his own master by law until his employers ceased trafficking, and again required his services.

At the time we write of, there were a great many renegade Indians who lived about the settlements, and which is still the case in the extreme south-west. These Indians generally are the most degraded of their tribe—outcasts, who, for crime or dissipation, are no longer allowed to associate with their people; they live by hunting or stealing, and spend their precarious gains in intoxication. Among the throng that crowded on the flat-boat on his arrival, were a number of these unfortunate beings; they were in-

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fluenced by no other motive than that of loitering round in idle speculation at what was going on. Mike was attracted towards them at sight; and as he too was in the situation that is deemed most favourable to mischief, it struck him that it was a good opportunity to have a little sport at the Indians' expense. Without ceremony, he gave a terrific war-whoop; and then mixing the language of the aborigines and his own together, he went on in savage fashion and bragged of his triumphs and victories on the war-path, with all the seeming earnestness of a real "brave." Nor were taunting words spared to exasperate the poor creatures, who, perfectly helpless, listened to the tales of their own greatness, and their own shame, until wound up to the highest pitch of impotent exasperation. Mike's companions joined in; thoughtless boys caught the spirit of the affair; and the Indians were goaded until they in turn made battle with their tongues. Then commenced a system of running against them, pulling off their blankets, together with a thousand other indignities; finally they made a precipitate retreat ashore, amid the hooting and jeering of an unfeeling crowd, who considered them poor devils destitute of feeling and humanity. Among this crowd of outcasts was a Cherokee, who bore the name of Proud Joe; what his real cognomen was, no one knew, for he was taciturn, haughty—and, in spite of his poverty and his manner of life won the name we have mentioned. His face was expressive of talent, but it was furrowed by the most terrible habits of drunkenness. That he was a superior Indian was admitted; and it was

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also understood that he was banished from his mountain home, his tribe being then numerous and powerful, for some great crime. He was always looked up to by his companions, and managed, however intoxicated he might be, to sustain a singularly proud bearing, which did not even depart from him while prostrated on the ground. Joe was filthy in his person and habits—in this respect he was behind his fellows; but one ornament of his person was attended to with a care which would have done honour to him if surrounded by his people, and in his native woods. Joe still wore with Indian dignity his scalp-lock; he ornamented it with taste, and cherished it, as report said, that some Indian messenger of vengeance might tear it from his head, as expiatory of his numerous crimes. Mike noticed this peculiarity; and reaching out his hand, plucked from it a hawk's feather, which was attached to the scalp-lock. The Indian glared horribly on Mike as he consummated the insult, snatched the feather from his hand, then shaking his clenched fist in the air, as if calling on Heaven for revenge, retreated with his friends. Mike saw that he had roused the savage's soul, and he marvelled wonderfully that so much resentment should be exhibited; and as an earnest to Proud Joe that the wrong he had done him should not rest unrevenged, he swore he would cut the scalp-lock off close to his head the first convenient opportunity he got, and then he thought no more about it.

The morning following the arrival of the boat at Louisville was occupied in making preparations to pursue the voyage down the river. Nearly every

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thing was completed, and Mike had taken his favourite place at the sweep, when looking up the river-bank, he beheld at some distance Joe and his companions, and perceived from their gesticulations that they were making him the subject of conversation.

Mike thought instantly of several ways in which he could show them altogether a fair fight, and then whip them with ease; he also reflected with what extreme satisfaction he would enter into the spirit of the arrangement, and other matters to him equally pleasing, when all the Indians disappeared, save Joe himself, who stood at times reviewing him in moody silence, and then staring round at passing objects. From the peculiarity of Joe's position to Mike, who was below him, his head and upper part of his body relieved boldly against the sky, and in one of his movements he brought his profile face to view. The prominent scalp-lock and its adornments seemed to be more striking than ever, and it again roused the pugnacity of Mike Fink; in an instant he raised his rifle, always loaded and at command, brought it to his eye, and, before he could be prevented, drew sight upon Proud Joe and fired. The ball whistled loud and shrill, and Joe, springing his whole length into the air, fell upon the ground. The cold-blooded murder was noticed by fifty persons at least, and there arose from the crowd an universal cry of horror and indignation at the bloody deed. Mike himself seemed to be much astonished, and in an instant reloaded his rifle, and as a number of white persons rushed towards the boat, Mike threw aside his coat, and, taking his powder horn between his teeth, leaped,

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rifle in hand, into the Ohio, and commenced swimming for the opposite shore. Some bold spirits determined Mike should not so easily escape, and jumping into the only skiff at command, pulled swiftly after him. Mike watched their movements until they came within a hundred yards of him, then turning in the water, he supported himself by his feet alone, and raised his deadly rifle to his eye. Its muzzle, if it spoke hostilely, was as certain to send a messenger of death through one or more of his pursuers, as if it were lightning, and they knew it; dropping their oars and turning pale, they bid Mike not to fire. Mike waved his hand towards the little village of Louisville, and again pursued his way to the opposite shore.

The time consumed by the firing of Mike's rifle, the pursuit, and the abandonment of it, required less time than we have taken to give the details; and in that time, to the astonishment of the gaping crowd around Joe, they saw him rising with a bewildered air; a moment more and he recovered his senses and stood up—*at his feet lay his scalp-lock!* The ball had cut it clear from his head; the cord around the root of it, in which were placed feathers and other ornaments, held it together; the concussion had merely stunned its owner; farther, he had escaped all bodily harm! A cry of exultation rose at the last evidence of the skill of Mike Fink—the exhibition of a shot that established his claim, indisputable, to the eminence he ever afterwards held—the unrivalled marksman of all the flat-boatmen of the western waters. Proud Joe had received many

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insults. He looked upon himself as a degraded, worthless being; and the ignominy heaped upon him he never, except by reply, resented; but this last insult was like seizing the lion by the mane, or a Roman senator by the beard—it roused the slumbering demon within, and made him again thirst to resent his wrongs with an intensity of emotion that can only be felt by an Indian. His eye glared upon the jeering crowd around like a fiend; his chest swelled and heaved until it seemed that he must suffocate. No one noticed this emotion. All were intent upon the exploit that had so singularly deprived Joe of his war-lock; and, smothering his wrath, he retreated to his associates with a consuming fire at his vitals. He was a different man from an hour before; and with that desperate resolution on which a man stakes his all, he swore by the Great Spirit of his forefathers that he would be revenged.

An hour after the disappearance of Joe, both he and Mike Fink were forgotten. The flat-boat, which the latter had deserted, was got under way, and dashing through the rapids in the river opposite Louisville wended on its course. As is customary when night sets in, the boat was securely fastened in some little bend or bay in the shore, where it remained until early morn.

Long before the sun had fairly risen, the boat was again pushed into the stream, and it passed through a valley presenting the greatest possible beauty and freshness of landscape the mind can conceive.

It was spring, and a thousand tints of green developed themselves in the half-formed foliage and

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bursting buds. The beautiful mallard skimmed across the water, ignorant of the danger of the white man's approach; the splendid spoon-bill decked the shallow places near the shore, while myriads of singing-birds filled the air with their unwritten songs. In the far reaches down the river, there occasionally might be seen a bear stepping along the ground as if dainty of its feet, and, snuffing the intruder on his wild home, he would retreat into the woods. To enliven all this, and give the picture the look of humanity, there might also be seen, struggling with the floating mists, a column of blue smoke, that came from a fire built on a projecting point of land, around which the current swept rapidly, and carried every thing that floated on the river. The eye of the boatman saw the advantage of the situation which the place rendered to those on shore, to annoy and attack, and as wandering Indians, in those days, did not hesitate to rob, there was much speculation as to what reception the boat would receive from the builders of the fire.

The rifles were all loaded, to be prepared for the worst, and the loss of Mike Fink lamented, as a prospect of a fight presented itself, where he could use his terrible rifle. The boat in the mean time swept round the point; but instead of an enemy, there lay, in a profound sleep, Mike Fink, with his feet toasting at the fire, his pillow was a huge bear, that had been shot on the day previous, while at his sides, and scattered in profusion around him, were several deer and wild turkeys. Mike had not been idle. After picking out a place most eligible to notice the

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"There lay, in a profound sleep, Mike Fink, toasting at the fire."
Page 128.

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passing boat, he had spent his time in hunting, and he was surrounded by trophies of his prowess. The scene that he presented was worthy of the time and the man, and would have thrown Landseer into a delirium of joy, could he have witnessed it. The boat, owing to the swiftness of the current, passed Mike's resting place, although it was pulled strongly to the shore. As Mike's companions came opposite to him, they raised such a shout, half exultation of meeting him, and half to alarm him with the idea that Joe's friends were upon him. Mike, at the sound, sprang to his feet, rifle in hand, and as he looked around, he raised it to his eyes, and by the time he discovered the boat, he was ready to fire. "Down with your shooting-iron, you wild critter," shouted one of the boatmen. Mike dropped the piece, and gave a loud halloo, that echoed among the solitudes like a piece of artillery. The meeting between Mike and his fellows was characteristic. They joked, and jibed him with their rough wit, and he parried it off with a most creditable ingenuity. Mike soon learned the extent of his rifle-shot—he seemed perfectly indifferent to the fact that Proud Joe was not dead. The only sentiment he uttered, was regret that he did not fire at the vagabond's head, and if he hadn't hit it, why, he made the first bad shot in twenty years. The dead game was carried on board of the boat, the adventure was forgotten, and every thing resumed the monotony of floating in a flat-boat down the Ohio.

A month or more elapsed, and Mike had progressed several hundred miles down the Mississippi; his

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journey had been remarkably free from incident; morning, noon, and night, presented the same banks, the same muddy water, and he sighed to see some broken land, some high hills, and he railed and swore, that he should have been such a fool as to desert his favourite Ohio for a river that produced nothing but alligators, and was never at best half finished.

Occasionally, the plentifulness of game put him in spirits, but it did not last long; he wanted more lasting excitement, and declared himself as perfectly miserable and helpless as a wild-cat without teeth or claws.

In the vicinity of Natchez rises a few abrupt hills, which tower above the surrounding lowlands of the Mississippi like monuments; they are not high, but from their loneliness and rarity they create sensations of pleasure and awe.

Under the shadow of one of these bluffs, Mike and his associates made the customary preparations to pass the night. Mike's enthusiasm knew no bounds at the sight of land again; he said it was as pleasant as "cold water to a fresh wound;" and, as his spirits rose, he went on making the region round about, according to his notions, an agreeable residence.

"The Choctaws live in these diggins," said Mike, "and a cursed time they must have of it. Now if I lived in these parts I'd declare war on 'em just to have something to keep me from growing dull; without some such business I'd be as musty as an old swamp moccasin. I could build a cabin on that ar hill yonder that could, from its location, with my

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rifle, repulse a whole tribe if they came after me. What a beautiful time I'd have of it! I never was particular about what's called a fair fight; I just ask half a chance, and the odds against me, and if I then don't keep clear of snags and sawyers, let me spring aleak and go to the bottom. Its natur that the big fish should eat the little ones. I've seen trout swallow a perch, and a cat would come along and swallow the trout, and perhaps, on the Mississippi, the alligators use up the cat, and so on to the end of the row. Well, I will walk tall into varmint and Indian; it's a way I've got, and it comes as natural as grinning to a hyena. I'm a regular tornado, tough as a hickory, and long-winded as a nor'-wester. I can strike a blow like a falling tree, and every lick makes a gap in the crowd that lets in an acre of sunshine. Whew, boys!" shouted Mike, twirling his rifle like a walking-stick around his head, at the ideas suggested in his mind. "Whew, boys! if the Choctaw divils in them ar woods thare would give us a brush, just as I feel now, I'd call them gentlemen. I must fight something, or I'll catch the dry rot—burnt brandy won't save me." Such were some of the expressions which Mike gave utterance to, and in which his companions heartily joined; but they never presumed to be quite equal to Mike, for his bodily prowess, as well as his rifle, were acknowledged to be unsurpassed. These displays of animal spirits generally ended in boxing and wrestling-matches, in which falls were received, and blows were struck without being noticed, that would have destroyed

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common men. Occasionally angry words and blows were exchanged, but, like the summer storm, the cloud that emitted the lightning purified the air; and when the commotion ceased, the combatants immediately made friends and became more attached to each other than before the cause that interrupted the good feelings occurred. Such were the conversation and amusements of the evening when the boat was moored under the bluffs we have alluded to. As night wore on, one by one of the hardy boatmen fell asleep, some in its confined interior, and others protected by a light covering in the open air. The moon arose in beautiful majesty; her silver light, behind the highlands, gave them a power and theatrical effect as it ascended; and as its silver rays grew perpendicular, they finally kissed gently the summit of the hills, and poured down their full light upon the boat, with almost noonday brilliancy. The silence with which the beautiful changes of darkness and light were produced made it mysterious. - It seemed as if some creative power was at work, bringing form and life out of darkness. In the midst of the witchery of this quiet scene, there sounded forth the terrible rifle, and the more terrible war-whoop of the Indian. One of the flat-boatmen, asleep on deck, gave a stifled groan, turned upon his face, and with a quivering motion, ceased to live. Not so with his companions—they in an instant, as men accustomed to danger and sudden attacks, sprang ready-armed to their feet; but before they could discover their foes, seven sleek and horribly

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painted savages leaped from the hill into the boat. The firing of the rifle was useless, and each man singled out a foe and met him with the drawn knife.

The struggle was quick and fearful; and deadly blows were given amid screams and imprecations that rent the air. Yet the voice of Mike Fink could be heard in encouraging shouts above the clamour. "Give it to them, boys!" he cried, "cut their hearts out! choke the dogs! Here's hell a-fire and the river rising!" then clenching with the most powerful of the assailants, he rolled with him upon the deck of the boat. Powerful as Mike was, the Indian seemed nearly a match for him. The two twisted and writhed like serpents,—now one seeming to have the advantage, and then the other.

In all this confusion there might occasionally be seen glancing in the moonlight the blade of a knife; but at whom the thrusts were made, or who wielded it, could not be discovered.

The general fight lasted less time than we have taken to describe it. The white men gained the advantage; two of the Indians lay dead upon the boat, and the living, escaping from their antagonists leaped ashore, and before the rifle could be brought to bear they were out of its reach. While Mike was yet struggling with his antagonist, one of his companions cut the boat loose from the shore, and, with powerful exertion, managed to get its bows so far into the current, that it swung round and floated; but before this was accomplished, and before any one interfered with Mike, he was on his feet, covered with blood, and blowing like a porpoise: by

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the time he could get his breath, he commenced talking. "Ain't been so busy in a long time," said he, turning over his victim with his foot; "that fellow fou't beautiful; if he's a specimen of the Choctaws that live in these parts, they are screamers; the infernal sarpents! the d——d possums!" Talking in this way, he with others, took a general survey of the killed and wounded. Mike himself was a good deal cut up with the Indian's knife; but he called his wounds blackberry scratches. One of Mike's associates was severely hurt; the rest escaped comparatively harmless. The sacrifice was made at the first fire; for beside the dead Indians, there lay one of the boat's crew, cold and dead, his body perforated with four different balls. That he was the chief object of attack seemed evident, yet no one of his associates knew of his having a single fight with the Indians. The soul of Mike was affected, and, taking the hand of his deceased friend between his own, he raised his bloody knife towards the bright moon, and swore that he would desolate "the nation" that claimed the Indians who made war upon them that night, and turned to his stiffened victim, that, dead as it was, retained the expression of implacable hatred and defiance, he gave it a smile of grim satisfaction, and then joined in the general conversation which the occurrences of the night would naturally suggest. The master of the "broad horn" was a business man, and had often been down the Mississippi. This was the first attack he had received, or knew to have been made from the shores inhabited by the Choctaws, except by

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the white man, and he, among other things, suggested the keeping the dead Indians until daylight, that they might have an opportunity to examine their dress and features, and see with certainty who were to blame for the occurrences of the night. The dead boatman was removed with care to a respectful distance; and the living, except the person at the sweep of the boat, were soon buried in profound slumber.

Not until after the rude breakfast was partaken of, and the funeral rites of the dead boatman were solemnly perfŏrmed, did Mike and his companions disturb the corses of the red men.

When both these things had been leisurely and gently got through with, there was a different spirit among the men.

Mike was astir, and went about his business with alacrity. He stripped the bloody blanket from the Indian he had killed, as if it enveloped something disgusting, and required no respect. He examined carefully the moccasins on the Indian's feet, pronouncing them at one time Chickasas, at another time, the Shawnese. He stared at the livid face, but could not recognise the style of paint that covered it.

That the Indians were not strictly national in their adornments, was certain, for they were examined by practised eyes, that could have told the nation of the dead, if such had been the case, as readily as a sailor could distinguish a ship by its flag. Mike was evidently puzzled; and as he was about giving up his task as hopeless, the dead body

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he was examining, from some cause, turned on its side. Mike's eyes distended, as some of his companions observed, "like a choked cat," and became riveted. He drew himself up in a half serious, and half comic expression, and pointing at the back of the dead Indian's head, there was exhibited a dead warrior in his paint, destitute of his scalp-lock, the small stump which was only left, being stiffened with *red paint*. Those who could read Indians' symbols learned a volume of deadly resolve in what they saw. The body of Proud Joe was stiff and cold before them.

The last and best shot of Mike Fink cost a brave man his life. The corpse so lately interred, was evidently taken in the moonlight by Proud Joe and his party, as that of Mike's, and they had risked their lives, one and all, that he might with certainty be sacrificed. Nearly a thousand miles of swamp had been threaded, large and swift running rivers had been crossed, hostile tribes passed through by Joe and his friends, that they might revenge the fearful insult, of destroying *without the life*, the sacred scalp-lock.

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ALLIGATOR KILLING.

In the dark recesses of the loneliest swamps, in those dismal abodes where decay and production seem to run riot; where the serpent crawls from his den among the tangled ferns and luxuriant grass, and hisses forth its propensities to destroy unmolested; where the toad and lizard spend the live-long day in their melancholy chirpings; where the stagnant pool festers and ferments, and bubbles up its foul miasma; where the fungi seem to grow beneath your gaze; where the unclean birds retire after their repast, and sit and stare with dull eyes in vacancy for hours and days together; there, originates the alligator; there, if happy in his history, he lives and dies. The pioneer of the forest invades his home; the axe lets in the sunshine upon his hiding-places: he frequently finds himself, like the Indian, surrounded by the encroachments of civilization, a mere intruder in his original domain, and under such circumstances only does he become an object of rough sport, the incidents of which deserve a passing notice.

The extreme southern portions of the United States are exceedingly favourable to the growth of the alligator: in the swamps that stretch over a vast extent of country, inaccessible almost to man, they increase in numbers and size, live undisputed monarchs of

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their abodes, exhibiting but little more intelligence, or exerting but little more volition than the decayed trunk of the tree, for which they are not unfrequently taken. In these swampy regions, however, are frequently found high ridges of land inviting cultivation. The log cabin takes the place of the rank vegetation; the evidences of thrift appear; and as the running streams display themselves, and are cleared for navigation, the old settler, the alligator, becomes exposed, and daily falls a victim to the rapacity of man. Thus hunted, like creatures of higher organization, he grows more intelligent, from the dangers of his situation; his taste grows more delicate, and he wars in turn upon his only enemy; soon acquires a civilized taste for pork and poultry, and acquires also a very uncivilized one for dogs.

An alligator in the truly savage state is a very happy reptile: encased in an armour as impenetrable as that of Ajax, he moves about unharmed by surrounding circumstances. The fangs of the rattlesnake grate over his scales as they would over a file; the constrictor finds nothing about him to crush; the poisonous moccasin bites at him in vain; and the greatest pest of all, the musquitto, that fills the air of his abode with a million stings, that burn the fleshlike sparks of fire, buzz out their fury upon his carcass in vain. To say that he enjoys not these advantages, that he crawls not forth as a proud knight in his armour, that he treads not upon the land as a master, and moves in the water the same, would be doing injustice to his actions, and his habits, and the philo-

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sophical example of independence which he sets to the trembling victims that are daily sacrificed to his wants.

The character of an alligator's face is far from being a flattering letter of recommendation. It suggests a rude shovel; the mouth extends from the extreme tip of the nose backwards until it passes the ears; indeed, about one-third of the whole animal is mouth, with the exact expression of a tailor's shears; and this mouth being ornamented with a superabundance of rows of white teeth, gives the same hope of getting out of it, sound in body and mind, if once in, as does the hopper of a bark-mill. Its body is short and round not unlike that of a horse; its tail is very long and flattened at the end like an oar. It has the most dexterous use of this appendage, propelling along, swiftly, and on land it answers the purpose of a weapon of defence.

The traveller through the lonely swamp at nightfall often finds himself surrounded by these singular creatures, and if he is unaccustomed to their presence and habits, they cause great alarm. Scattered about in every direction, yet hidden by the darkness, he hears their huge jaws open and shut with a force that makes a noise, when numbers are congregated, like echoing thunder. Again, in the glare of the campfire, will sometimes be seen the huge alligator crawling within the lighted circle, attracted by the smell of food—perchance you have *squatted* upon a nest of eggs, encased with great judgment in the centre of some high ground you yourself have chosen to pass the night upon. Many there are, who go unconcern-

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edly to sleep with such intruders in their immediate vicinity; but a rifle-ball, effectively fired, will most certainly leave you unmolested, and the dying alligator, no doubt, comforts itself that the sun will not neglect its maternal charge, but raise up its numerous young as hideous and destructive as itself.

The alligator is a luxurious animal, fond of all the comforts of life, which are, according to its habits, plentifully scattered around it. We have watched them, enjoying their evening nap in the shades of tangled vines, and in the hollow trunk of the cypress, or floating like a log on the top of some sluggish pool. We have seen them sporting in the green slime, and catching, like a dainty gourmand, the fattest frogs, and longest snakes; but they are in the height of their glory, stretched out upon the sand-bar, in the meridian sun, when the summer heats pour down and radiate back from the parched sand, as tangibly as they would from red hot iron. In such places will they bask and blow off, with a loud noise, the inflated air and water, that would seem to expand within them as if confined in an iron pipe, occasionally rolling about their swinish eyes with a slowness of motion, that, while it expresses the most perfect satisfaction, is in no way calculated to agitate their nerves, or discompose them by too suddenly taking the impression of outward objects. While thus disposed of, and after the first nap is taken, they amuse themselves with opening their huge jaws to their widest extent, upon the inside of which, instinctively settle, thousands of musquittoes and other noxious insects that infest the abode of the alligator. When

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the inside of the mouth is thus covered, the reptile brings his jaws together with inconceivable velocity, gives a gulp or two, and again sets his formidable trap for this small game.

Some years since, a gentleman in the southern part of Louisiana, "opening a plantation," found, after most of the forest had been cleared off, that in the centre of his land was a boggy piece of low soil covering nearly twenty acres. This place was singularly infested with alligators. Among the first victims that fell a prey to their rapacity, were a number of hogs and fine poultry; next followed most of a pack of fine deer hounds. It may be easily imagined that the last outrage was not passed over with indifference. The leisure time of every day was devoted to their extermination, until the cold of winter rendered them torpid and buried them up in the mud. The following summer, as is naturally the case, the swamp, from the heat of the sun, contracted in its dimensions; a number of artificial ditches drained off the water, and left the alligators little else to live in than mud, about the consistency of good mortar: still the alligators clung, with singular tenacity, to their native homesteads as if perfectly conscious that the coming fall would bring them rain. While thus exposed, a general attack was planned, carried into execution, and nearly every alligator of any size was destroyed. It was a fearful and disgusting sight to see them rolling about in the thick mud, striking their immense jaws together in the agony of death. Dreadful to relate, the stench of these decaying bodies in the hot sun produced an

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unthought-of evil. Teams of oxen were used in vain to haul them away; the progress of corruption under the sun of a tropical climate made the attempt fruitless. On the very edge of the swamp, with nothing exposed but the head, lay a huge monster, evidently sixteen or eighteen feet long; he had been wounded in the melee, and made incapable of moving, and the heat had actually baked the earth around his body as firmly as if imbedded in cement. It was a cruel and singular exhibition, to see so much power and destruction so helpless. We amused ourselves in throwing things into his great cavernous mouth, which he would grind up between his teeth. Seizing a large oak rail, we attempted to run it down his throat, but it was impossible; for he held it for a moment as firmly as if it had been the bow of a ship, then with his jaws crushed and ground it to fine splinters. The old fellow, however, had his revenge; the dead alligators were found more destructive than the living ones, and the plantation for a season had to be abandoned.

In shooting the alligator, the bullet must hit just in front of the fore legs, where the skin is most vulnerable; it seldom penetrates in other parts of the body. Certainty of aim, therefore, tells, in alligator shooting, as it does in every thing else connected with sporting. Generally, the alligator, when wounded, retreats to some obscure place; but if wounded in a *bayou*, where the banks are steep, and not affording any hiding-places, he makes considerable amusement in his convolutions in the water, and in his efforts to avoid the pain of his smarting wounds. In

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shooting, the instant you fire, the reptile disappears, and you are for a few moments unable to learn the extent of injury you have inflicted. An excellent shot, that sent the load with almost unerring certainty through the eye, was made at a huge alligator, and, as usual, he disappeared, but almost instantly rose again, spouting water from his nose, not unlike a whale. A second ball, shot in his tail, sent him down again, but he instantly rose and spouted: this singular conduct prompted a bit of provocation, in the way of a plentiful sprinkling of bits of wood, rattled against his hide. The alligator lashed himself into a fury; the blood started from his mouth; he beat the water with his tail until he covered himself with spray, but never sunk without instantly rising again. In the course of the day he died and floated ashore; and, on examination, it was found that the little valve nature has provided the reptile with, to close over its nostrils when under water, had been cut off by the first shot, and thus compelled him to stay on the top of the water to keep from being drowned. We have heard of many since who have tried thus to wound them, and although they have been hit in the nose, yet they have been so crippled as to sink and die.

The alligator is particularly destructive on pigs and dogs, when they inhabit places near plantations; and if you wish to shoot them, you can never fail to draw them on the surface of the water, if you will make a dog yell, or pig squeal; and that too, in places where you may have been fishing all day, without suspecting their presence. Herodotus men-

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tions the catching of crocodiles in the Nile, by baiting a hook with flesh, and then attracting the reptile towards it by making a hog squeal. The ancient Egyptian manner of killing the crocodile is different from that of the present day, as powder and ball have changed the manner of destruction; but the fondness for pigs in the crocodile and alligator, after more than two thousand years, remains the same.

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A GRIZZLY BEAR HUNT.

THE every-day sports of the wild woods include many feats of daring that never find a pen of record. Constantly, in the haunts of the savage, are enacting scenes of thrilling interest, the very details of which would make the denizen of enlightened life turn away with instinctive dread. Every Indian tribe has its heroes, celebrated respectively for their courage in different ways exhibited. Some for their acuteness in pursuing the enemy on the war-path, and others for the destruction they have accomplished among the wild beasts of the forest. A great hunter among the Indians is a marked personage. It is a title that distinguishes its possessor among his people as a prince; while the exploits in which he has been engaged hang about his person as brilliantly as the decorations of so many orders. The country in which the Osage finds a home possesses abundantly the grizzly bear, an animal formidable beyond any other inhabitant of the North American forests: an animal seemingly insensible to pain, uncertain in its habits, and by its mighty strength able to overcome any living obstacle that comes within its reach, as an enemy. The Indian warrior, of any tribe, among the haunts of the grizzly bear, finds no necklace so honourable to be worn as the claws of this gigantic animal, if he fall by his own prowess;

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and if he can add an eagle's plume to his scalp-lock, plucked from a bird shot while on the wing, he is honourable indeed. The Indian's "smoke," like the fire-side of the white man, is often the place where groups of people assemble to relate whatever may most pleasantly while away the hours of a long evening, or destroy the monotony of a dull and idle day. On such occasions, the old "brave" will sometimes relax from his natural gravity, and grow loquacious over his chequered life. But no recital commands such undivided attention as the adventures with the grizzly bear; and the death of an enemy on the war-path hardly vies with it in interest.

We have listened to these soul-stirring adventures over the urn, or while lounging on the sofa; and the recital of the risks run, the hardships endured, have made us think them almost impossible, when compared with the conventional self-indulgence of enlightened life. But they were the tales of a truthful man: a hunter, who had strayed away from the scenes once necessary for his life, and who loved, like the worn-out soldier, to "fight his battles over," in which he was once engaged. It may be, and is the province of the sportsman to exaggerate; but the "hunter," surrounded by the magnificence and sublimity of an American forest, earning his bread by the hardy adventures of the chase, meets with too much reality to find room for colouring—too much of the sublime and terrible in the scenes with which he is associated to be boastful of himself. Apart from the favourable effects of civilization, he

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is also separated from its contaminations; and boasting and exaggeration are "settlements," weaknesses, and not the products of the wild woods.

The hunter, whether Indian or white, presents one of the most extraordinary exhibitions of the singular capacity of the human senses to be improved by cultivation. The unfortunate deaf, dumb, and blind girl, in one of our public institutions,* selects her food, her clothing, and her friends, by the touch alone—so delicate has it become from the mind's being directed to that sense alone. The forest hunter uses the sight most extraordinarily well, and experience at last renders it so keen, that the slightest touch of passing object on the leaves, trees, or earth, seems to leave deep and visible impressions, that to the common eye are unseen as the path of the bird through the air. This knowledge governs the chase and the war-path; this knowledge is what, when excelled in, makes the master-spirit among the rude inhabitants of the woods: and that man is the greatest chief, who follows the coldest trail, and leaves none behind by his own footsteps. The hunter in pursuit of the grizzly bear is governed by this instinct of sight. It directs him with more certainty than the hound is directed by his nose. The impressions of the bear's footsteps upon the leaves, its marks on the trees, its resting-places, are all known long before the bear is really seen; and the hunter, while thus following "the trail," calculates the very sex, weight, and age with certainty.

* Hartford Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb.

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Thus it is that he will neglect or choose a trail: one because it is poor, and another because it is small, another because it is with cubs, another because it is fat, identifying the very trail as the bear itself; and herein, perhaps, lies the distinction between the sportsman, and the huntsman. The hunter follows his object by his own knowledge and instinct, while the sportsman employs the instinct of domesticated animals to assist in his pursuits.

The different methods to destroy the grizzly bear, by those who hunt them, are as numerous as the bears that are killed. They are not animals which permit of a system in hunting them; and it is for this reason they are so dangerous and difficult to destroy. The experience of one hunt may cost a limb or a life in the next one, if used as a criterion; and fatal, indeed, is the mistake, if it comes to grappling with an animal whose gigantic strength enables him to lift a horse in his huge arms, and bear it away as a prize. There is one terrible exception to this rule; one habit of the animal may be certainly calculated on, but a daring heart only can take advantage of it.

The grizzly bears, like the tiger and lion, have their caves in which they live; but they use them principally as a safe lodging-place when the cold of winter renders them torpid and disposed to sleep. To these caves they retire late in the fall, and they seldom venture out until the warmth of spring. Sometimes two occupy one cave, but this is not often the case, as the unsociability of the animal is proverbial, they preferring to be solitary and alone.

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A knowledge of the forests, and an occasional trailing for bear inform the hunter of these caves, and the only habit of the grizzly bear that can with certainty be taken advantage of, is that of his being in his cave alive, if at a proper season. And the hunter has the terrible liberty of entering his cave single-handed, and there destroying him. Of this only method of hunting the grizzly bear we would attempt a description.

The thought of entering a cave, inhabited by one of the most powerful beasts of prey, is calculated to try the strength of the best nerves; and when it is considered that the least trepidation, the slightest mistake, may cause, and probably will result in the instant death of the hunter, it certainly exhibits the highest demonstration of physical courage to pursue such a method of hunting. Yet there are many persons in the forests of North America who engage in such perilous adventures with no other object in view than the "sport" or hearty meal. The hunter's preparations to "beard the lion in his den" commence with examining the mouth of the cave he is about to enter. Upon the signs there exhibited he decides whether the bear is alone; for if there are two, the cave is never entered. The size of the bear is also thus known, and the time since he was last in search of food. The way this knowledge is obtained, from indications so slight, or unseen to an ordinary eye, is one of the greatest mysteries of the woods. Placing ourselves at the mouth of the cave containing a grizzly bear, to our untutored senses there would be nothing to distinguish it from one

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that was empty; but if some Diana of the forest would touch our eyes, and give us the instinct of sight possessed by the hunter, we would argue thus: "From all the marks about the mouth of the cave, the occupant has not been out for a great length of time, for the grass and the earth have not been lately disturbed. The bear is in the cave, for the last tracks made are with the toe-marks towards the cave. There is but one bear, because the tracks are regular and of the same size. He is a large bear; the length of the step and the size of the paw indicate this; and he is a fat one, because his *hind feet do not step in the impressions made by the fore ones*, as is always the case with a lean bear." Such are the signs and arguments that present themselves to the hunter; and mysterious as they seem, when not understood, when explained they strike the imagination at once as being founded on the unerring simplicity and the certainty of nature. It may be asked, how is it that the grizzly bear is so formidable to numbers when met in the forest, and when in a cave can be assailed successfully by a single man? In answer to this, we must recollect that the bear is only attacked in his cave when he is in total darkness, and suffering from surprise and the torpidity of the season. These three things are in this method of hunting taken advantage of; and but for these advantages, no quickness of eye, no steadiness of nerve or forest experience, would protect for an instant the intruder to the cave of the grizzly bear. The hunter, having satisfied himself about the cave, prepares a candle, which he makes out of the wax taken from the comb

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of wild bees, softened by the grease of the bear. This candle has a large wick, and emits a brilliant flame. Nothing else is needed but the rifle. The knife and the belt are useless; for if a struggle should ensue that would make it available, the foe is too powerful to mind its thrusts before the hand using it would be dead. Bearing the candle before him, with the rifle in a convenient position, the hunter fearlessly enters the cave. He is soon surrounded by darkness, and is totally unconscious where his enemy will reveal himself. Having fixed the candle in the ground in firm position, with an apparatus provided he lights it, and its brilliant flame soon penetrates into the recesses of the cavern—its size of course rendering the illumination more or less complete. The hunter now places himself on his belly, having the candle between the back part of the cave where the bear is, and himself; in this position, with the muzzle of the rifle protruding out in front of him, he patiently waits for his victim. A short time only elapses before Bruin is aroused by the light. The noise made by his starting from sleep attracts the hunter, and he soon distinguishes the black mass, moving, stretching, and yawning like a person awaked from a deep sleep. The hunter moves not, but prepares his rifle; the bear, finally roused, turns his head toward the candle, and, with slow and waddling steps, approaches it.

Now is the time that tries the nerves of the hunter. Too late to retreat, his life hangs upon his certain aim and the goodness of his powder. The slightest variation in the bullet, or a flashing pan, and he is

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a doomed man. So tenacious of life is the common black bear, that it is frequently wounded in its most vital parts, and will still escape, or give terrible battle. But the grizzly bear seems to possess an infinitely greater tenacity of life. His skin, covered by matted hair, and the huge bones of his body, protect the heart, as if incased in a wall; while the brain is buried in a skull, compared to which adamant is not harder. A bullet, striking the bear's forehead, would flatten, if it struck squarely on the solid bone, as if fired against a rock; and dangerous indeed would it be to take the chance of reaching the animal's heart. With these fearful odds against the hunter, the bear approaches the candle, growing every moment more sensible of some uncommon intrusion. He reaches the blaze, and either raises his paw to strike it, or lifts his nose to scent it, either of which will extinguish it, and leave the hunter and the bear in total darkness. This dreadful moment is taken advantage of. The loud report of the rifle fills the cave with stunning noise, and as the light disappears, the ball, if successfully fired, penetrates the eye of the huge animal—the only place where it would find a passage to the brain; and this not only gives the wound, but instantly paralyzes, that no temporary resistance may be made. On such chances the American hunter perils his life, and often thoughtlessly courts the danger.

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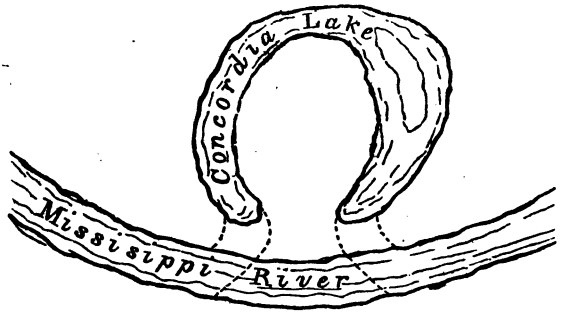
CONCORDIA LAKE.*

OPPOSITE the high bluffs of "the Natchez" lies the beautiful country of Concordia, level as the surface of water, and rich in its soil as it is possible for earth to be. At present a few large plantations occupy much of its space, laid off in enormous fields,

*A DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATING THE FORMATION OF INLAND LAKES, NEAR THE BANKS OF THE MISSISSIPPI.



A "Cut-off."

In the above diagram by the dotted lines the original course of the Mississippi may be seen. At some time the river *cut off* its circular route and pursued its way straight ahead, leaving an inland lake of horse-shoe form. By a reference to any correct map, these lakes will all be found of the same general character and appearance. Many of the finest and largest known have thus been formed within the memory of inhabitants living on the river or the lakes.

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where the plough sometimes progresses a mile without turning in the furrow. In old times the Mississippi ran through the lower part of Concordia, making one of those sudden bends where it comes back almost to the very point of diverging. In one of its capricious moods, it cut through this thus-formed isthmus, and ran more directly to the sea, leaving a kind of horse-shoe furrow to mark the old bed of the river. The high waters of the spring, bearing within their bosom the sediment of almost unlimited caving shores, deposited in time at the mouth of the "cut off" the solid earth, and thus formed, as has been done a hundred times before and is constantly doing now, the bed of an inland lake, bordering the shores of the Mississippi. Thus originated the beautiful lake of Concordia, upon the shores of which, we can imagine, in years not far hence, the continuous line of semi-palaces and the crowded mart; and resting upon its waters the gay pleasure-boat, and the cumbrous one of commerce, together with all the associations of a country long settled and full of wealth. At present, however, a different scene is presented; comparatively all is wild; the residences that reflect in its clear waters are like angels' visits, few and far between, while the fairy island, that is set like a gem in its centre, still remains in its primeval wilderness.

Along the shores of Concordia Lake is heard the oft-repeated echo of the sharp rifle and the ringing melody of the hound. In the luxuriant foliage of "the island" the beautiful deer graze plentifully and almost undisturbed. The wild turkey "clucks" to

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daylight almost as securely as its representative in the farm-yard. The hunter, starting his game on the mainland, expects that it will plunge into the lake to avoid the ruthless hound: and often, indeed, is the angler startled from his quiet by the deep-mouthed bay of the hard-pressing pack while in the still dark water, where he expected to deceive the trout, and to which he stole so stealthily, there will plunge the swelled-neck buck, bearing his proud antlers aloft, and, breasting the waves nobly, labouring for life. The light canoe or the rude skiff is pressed into service, by some "volunteer of the hunt," and pushed across to "the island." The buck, thus pressed on all sides, and perhaps met with a salute as he touches the shore from a murderous fowling-piece, plunges again into the lake. Every thing seems full of animation: you hear the shout of the hunters encouraging the dogs; amidst the music, trumpet-tongued, the breezes seem to spring up and shake the pendant foliage from sympathy. At break-neck pace, the well-trained horse, with distended eyes, leaps over the ravine and fallen tree, the happiest being in the chase, then checks his swift speed at command, and as steady as a rock awaits the shot from off his back; then again bounds forward to mark the work of death. The poor buck, pressed on all sides, and at every movement of his muscles parting, through his wounds, with his life's blood, turns upon his enemies, rears, plunges and strikes with his fore-feet; but he is dragged down and slain, his hair turned forward as roughly as the quills of the porcupine, his eye mysteriously green

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from rage, and unflinching in its defiance to the last. The excitement passes away. The horn rings merrily as a token of triumph, and silence again reigns. The angler resumes his sport, and the flocks of white crane settle down in the shallows. The waves, caused by the last throes of the dying deer, spend themselves in light shore-reaching circles until they are lost in the mirrored surface, and the last token of the presence of the most beautiful inhabitant of the forest is obliterated as if it had not been.

The angling of Lake Concordia is one of its distinctive features: if you will go to the favourite places, you can, at any time, overload yourself with fish. In the centre of the lake is its outlet; the Cocodra, a narrow and deep stream, bears off its waters towards the great Mississippi; a few miles run, it widens into "Turtle Lake," with bolder, and therefore, seemingly wilder scenery than is often to be met with in the alluvial. Turtle is a beautiful name; it suggests pleasant pictures. Upon the shores of Turtle Lake is heard the cooing of many doves; but it is Turtle Lake from its abundance of "green, amphibious soft-shells" that cover the fallen timber when the sun shines hot, and drop into the water at your near approach

"As easy as falling off a log."

In the immediate influence of the Cocodra, you can catch an abundance of trout or perch without much skill or trouble; but as you approach the extreme ends or heads of the lake, more art and patience are required. It has been convenient for us to throw the line just where least reward might be expected,

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yet we have always been paid for our labour, and served our purpose well. We are great anglers, though we seldom catch fish. There is a spirit in the still waters or running brook that laves the soul, but we cannot communicate with it, unless it comes to us along the rod and line; herein, if naught else, would be our reward.

The winds, and the sky, and the tide, and the bait, and the tackle, affect catching fish; but they affect not thought. We sit down under the shade of the favourite tree, or the shelving bank, and cast our snare, and philosophize. We have often let the naked hook play the scarecrow among the game, while we have watched the mischievous blackbird shoot along the margin of the water, dabbling for minnows. There were a pair of eagles when we first knew Lake Concordia, that in the morning light rose up over the lowlands, as if they would peep down into the east, and surprise the sun at its getting up. There were no towering Himmalahs to rest their wings midway, and when they had gilded their pinions with the coming glory, thus hailing the birth of another day, then they would shoot down to earth as if with glad tidings, and soar joyously over their wild home, fanning the still air into zephyrs, and sending the fearful waterfowl in confused groups from their presence. A tall cypress that peered over its fellows, held among its dead limbs at the top, a black confused mass that was known as "the eagle's nest;" it was entrenched by matted foliage that revels in the southern swamps, hiding away the alligator and other reptiles: it was beyond the reach of the rifle; the

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tallest and safest eyry for miles about. A hurricane may have prostrated it, or the thunderbolt shattered it—the eagles and their nest have disappeared.

A rough Virginia fence, over which the Cherokee rose had entwined itself, as if in mercy to its jagged appearance, made a good shade and a deep shadow at some hours of the day, and from its prodigal wealth in little buds, enlivened dull fishing. A little wren we remember in particular, who had built its nest in the hollow of the unsightly skull of an ox, suspended on an upright post of the fence. It was a little fellow, and busy beyond description; a perfect hen hussy; there was always a stray horsehair, or bit of moss in the wrong place, or too much down protruded from the eyeless sockets. We have watched the bird as we sat lazily waiting our fortune, and thought nature would thus pleasantly teach us a lesson of industry, and also one of gratitude. We have seen its little throat palpitate and swell with song until it seemed almost to despair of wringing out its music. It would throw its head upon its downy breast, and then raise it with each ascending note until it fairly screamed on its tiptoes, then tripping into its nest, a new thought would suggest itself, and again the air would be laden with sweet sounds, uttered, but never written, inspired by Him who created the harmony which met the ear when "the stars sang together for joy." A tap from our rod, but gently though, as if from a beauty's fan, and we turn to our occupation—struggling upon our line is a black perch; and now that we remember it, the float was out of sight when that bit of sweet sounds done up in feathers commenced

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"He stared wildly about him, and discovered the Indian form bending over him."

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pouring out its little heart to the spring and the sunshine.

Our early friend Elliott is a devoted angler; he has an interminable quantity of trappings; and when we first looked into his collection of rods, reels, hooks and swivels, we told him we feared they were like the rules of logic, more for show than use. He replied, we might make the same remark of the marriage ceremony, and think so too, if we put no value upon legitimacy. We saw there was something deeper than our philosophy in his answer, and have believed in costly tackling ever since. We found Elliott once fishing at a spot that commanded a fine view of the lake; just beyond him, there ran out into the water a sharp point graced with live oak trees covered with moss; behind the deep foliage, the sun was sinking, throwing dark shadows, while a stray pencil of light would here and there glance through the trees and kiss the water with almost blinding brilliancy. His thoughts were dissipated, for he was speculating upon the landscape, then listlessly looking at his success of the evening as an angler. He held up his "string" to our gaze; upon it was a beautiful fish burnished with silver; he was attractive indeed, to look at, but one acquainted with its merits knew too well of the infinite bones that spread under his gay exterior as confusedly as the stems of a brier-patch. This fish was kept merely for show. The next, and only one, was a juvenile perch; the poor innocent had scarcely got clear of the spawn, and become able to flourish in water fairly over its head, when his want of experience had placed him at the

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tender mercies of the hook and line. We pitied him as he occasionally whipped his tail about, and then worked his jaws upon the string that held him fast as if it were a cud of bitterness. Such had been Elliott's fortune. With slowly decreasing interest had he watched his float as it sat daintily on the water, and wished it to disappear.

"I love to see it tremble," said Elliott, pointing to it, speaking in a softened voice, "tremble as if it had a pulse ere it darts so swiftly from the sight. What expectations it gives rise to! It moves a little; some gigantic fish has just brushed against the bait and is now preparing to gulp it down. Again it trembles"—Elliott struck, and drew into the air a "little one," playing its fins like a humming bird, and as transparent as if it were made of amber. How astonished and disappointed were the beating hearts at both ends of the line. Elliott took the incipient off carefully, and let it roll down towards the water through a little dry earth. How the prismatic scales grow dim with the contact, but for its moving about, it might be taken for a chip. A dash in the water—it's off—cleaned of dust, its yellow sides turn downwards, and the little black line of its back passes away like thought.

A juvenile toad that was playing "leap-frog" for the sake of exercising his developing body, chanced, as his bad luck would have it, to pass our way. A little exertion secured the creature, and with as much delicacy as a groomsman would place a ring upon the finger of his beloved bride, Elliott secured the toad on his hook, and committed it to the lake.

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The little unfortunate toad struck out for dear life, and swam boyfully; but his time had come; the very ripple his little arms made in the water had caught the never-closed eye of a lazy trout. The fish came to the surface, and eyed the bait as a gourmand will the dishes of an arranging dessert, rolled over its spotted sides sportively, and disappeared. An instant elapsed, when the trout appeared coming up vertically, its fine head glistened in the sun a moment, then, as quick as thought, again it disappeared; it then rose, floated nearer the bait, "mouthing at it" most provokingly. We were all excitement; Elliott, on the contrary, performed his office as silently and immovedly as a statue. In fact his rod lay carelessly across his knee as if he never expected to use it; but his eye the while was upon his game; he knew its humours perfectly, and was contentedly indulging its capriciousness. Presently the trout turned and swam towards the centre of the lake—we thought it lost. Elliott raised his delicate rod, and, for the first time, moved it slowly, skimming his bait along the surface of the water in little leaps—a ripple—a rushing noise—a tail quivering in the air, and our poor frog was in the trout's maw. The fish had turned from its course to gather one more dainty mouthful ere it buried itself in the deep water. The capture was gracefully made, and the fish was game to the last. The noble fellow pressed back his gills, distended his mouth, until you could put in it your hand to disengage the hook, then, laid upon some wet moss, with a few convulsive struggles, he died—a trophy of the angler's skill.

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Among the fastnesses that border on Concordia Lake still linger some few renegade Indians, who make a precarious living in the barter of game; disappearing sometimes for months, then presenting themselves with illy-prepared peltries, a dead deer or turkey—the sale of which procures their few necessaries—and again they will wander off, as wild and heedless as the passing winds. These "red children" complete the picturesque. Gypsy-like, they choose the happiest locations for their "smokes," the men with the ingenuity of cats finding a soft and fitting place for comfortable sleep, while the women always sit by watching. An old oak, at whose foot centuries since the earth-dissolving waters of the Mississippi boiled, robbing the roots of its soil, until they protruded like the writhing forms of a hundred serpents, seeking nourishment deeper in the bosom of the earth for their attempted exhumation. An old oak, whose largest limbs are dead, yet, like proud age, affects youth by false appointments; of wigs, of manilla-scented muscadines; of rouge, of the deep-red foliage of a hundred flowering vines; of props, of the quick growing cotton-wood that shoots aloft amid its vines; of stays, the convolving grape, binding together its wind-whistled ribs. Under this old oak we have "frequent met" a family of the once powerful Choctaws. From where they dozed away the noontide heats, but for a narrow belt of intervening forest, could be seen the Natchez bluffs, and on them, breaking darkly against the sky, the ruins of old Fort Rosalie.

Four generations since, and the ancestors of this

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Indian family, "seven hundred strong," fell upon the Natchez, while exulting over the massacre of the French at the fort of Rosalie, stormed their villages, liberated their prisoners, and, without loss, exulted in the possession of three-score scalps. Ten days after, the French from New Orleans completed the victory, and thus destroyed the most singular nation of all our aborigines; scattering them among the Chicasas and Muscogees; and seizing their great seer and two hundred prisoners as slaves. The flying remnant of the tribe crossed the Mississippi, swept by the old oak we have described in their flight, coursed along the margin of Concordia Lake, reflected fleetingly in the Cocodra and Turtle lakes, and entrenched themselves for deathly siege, in ancient mounds, a day's travel from their native homes, over which the white man now incuriously wanders, ignorant alike of their associations or purposes, and known but to the few who cherish the traditions and antiquities of our western home.

Such are a few of the incidents and associations of Concordia Lake.

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A FRONTIER INCIDENT.

"Fortune favours the brave."

A FRONTIER military post, in peace or war, to the great number of persons, is a place of much fun and frolic. We are indebted to such a place for much past pleasure and many pleasing recollections. The soldier's life is one of adventure; few in the army, indeed, are dull talkers, though all, in their way, can tell events so thrilling in their details, that the manner is unnoticed in the interest of the subjects themselves. Then again, these military posts have some good fellows, as hangers-on, that are nowhere else to be met with; gentlefolks that at college were remarkable for their low standing with the faculty, and for their popularity with the boys. Mad scapegraces, that after graduating as doctors or lawyers, lost all their practice at home; the one by quoting too largely from the imagination instead of the statutes, the other by some unfortunate propensity to feel ladies' hands instead of their pulses, in an unprofessional manner. Good dogs, indeed, but unsuited to the times; and where else could they find a field for gibes and jests like a new country? or more fit companions than the officers of frontier garrisons? Besides, the officers are so glad to meet with such refined company where they least expected; and the hangers-on are so de-

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lighted to meet with champagne and pate de foie gras where they least expected it. Thus, both parties are always pleased, always ready to be happy, and to do their best to make all around them so; and a frontier garrison is a jolly place. Major Freeman was the name of the commander of one of these military posts; he possessed the most generous and warm temperament, and, as is the consequence sometimes with such persons, he was exceedingly passionate. Educated in a camp from his infancy, he had learned to command, even in his boyhood, as he learned to grow, without knowing anything about the matter,—except that he grew and commanded, and took one as much as a matter of course as the other. As manhood and middle age came on, as might be expected, his influence among his equals amounted to the highest respect, and with his inferiors it was wonderful; they would quail before his angry eye and tongue, as if they saw lightning and heard thunder. And Major Freeman was loved, almost idolized, by all who knew him: and the helpless, injured innocent, though the humblest being under his command, would from him receive redress and protection. In early life, the Major had won the fame of a brave and prudent man; but many years of glorious ease had made him the master-spirit in feats of the trencher: in this active service, he told the best story, had the "choicest brands," the best cook, and with a delicacy almost unknown, always turned his back, or shut up his eyes, whenever you drank at his table or sideboard. In him we had a frontier lion; and the way said lion and his companions used to destroy the beasts of the

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forest, including a considerable number of fowls of the air, was "huckleberry above the persimmon" of any native in the country, and astonished the natives beyond any thing else, save the idea of a "man's keeping two varmints in a grass-patch, when he might shoot a dozen by going a little way into the woods." These "varmints" were two beautiful deer, which the Major had purchased, when they were fawns, from some wandering Indians; he had fed them with milk from his own hand, and now that they were full grown, they adorned the garrison park,—the favourites on whom he bestowed those affections, which would, most probably, under other circumstances, have been lavished on a wife and children. These deer, in fact, were sacred; if the roe eat up the dahlias, jasmines, or other choice flowers of the neighbouring gardens,—if the buck kicked over every child he met, and then half kicked out their eyes,—for these things were constant pastimes,—the Major would pleasantly observe, that "flowers were made for Fanny to eat, and Dick's heels were perfectly harmless, if the young ones were out of the way:" all was wrong; if so, the deer were right.

On a fine summer evening, the jolly good fellows of the garrison, as they were wont, headed by the Major, were whiling the time in the most agreeable manner, by turns humorous and pathetic, the feeling softened by choice wine, the mind disposed to quiet, until we had arrived at that point, of all others the most agreeable, that hallucination, when one is entirely satisfied with himself, and feels at peace and good-will with all mankind. In this humour, for the

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first time in our memory, we were interrupted. A tall, scape-gallows-looking fellow, thrust a strange face in at the door without notice or ceremony; the Major's eye flashed for a moment, but grew mild as he discovered it was "one of the people" (the soldiers were under better discipline) that had interrupted us, and at the same time demanded what the fellow wanted. The reply was prompt, and as follows: "I comprehend that you are fond of venison in this 'ere place; well, I have a fine buck to sell—a r'al smasher—and you can have him for precious little plunder, and no mistake." The name of the venison acted upon our senses like a charm, and we congratulated each other with cordiality that would have done honour to friends meeting after a long separation. While this was going on, the Major bargained for the buck, provided he liked its appearance on sight; and, purse in hand, and followed by his gallant companions in knives and forks, went out to see the carcass. Oh, horror! who shall describe the scene that ensued! On the grass before us, lay a magnificent buck slightly wounded, with his feet bound, and panting from fear, as if his heart would fly out of his mouth, and big round tears were rolling down his dappled cheeks. In affecting plight, the Major discovered his favourite! Speechless with rage, he looked at the poor prisoner, and then at its keeper; and choking like a drowning man, he at last exclaimed, with the voice of thunder, "Damnation, fellow, where did you get that deer?" The astonished countryman knew the man with whom he was dealing, and his anger appalled him; and in choaking

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accents he replied, as soon as his fright would let him speak, "I caught the thing in the river below, I did." "You are a liar!" roared the Major, "you have been robbing my premises, and you shall rot in prison, you shall ——!" then drawing the knife, he stept forward, and with one dash unloosed the deer, which struggled upon its feet and limped away; then turning, as we thought, to unloose the robber's windpipe, who had, on the appearance of the knife, broke and made good his escape before he could be molested. The Major in his rage, gasped convulsively for a moment, and then, giving utterance to the wildest imprecations, disappeared. The effect of all this on our party was dreadful; it was the first time in his life that he had ever left his guests without a smile, and an invitation to "walk in, and be at home." We viewed each other with rueful countenances, and returned, unbidden, to the room we had so recently left. Here we found the Major, moody and dispirited, and this humour increased upon him as we heard the report of a rifle, which deposited its contents in the unfortunate deer's head, by the Major's orders, to release the poor creature from its sufferings. In the midst of this embarrassing situation, there burst into the room, contrary to all military etiquette, a "reg'lar;" his eyes staring, and his mouth open. This piece of ill manners, and second interruption, that too, from one of his own corps, was too much for the Major as he then felt; and, probably taking advantage of this—except to give loose to his pent-up feelings,—he leaped the table, seized the poor private by the throat, and hurled him to the floor,

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exclaiming—"You poltroon! and will you too, without a single mark of respect, enter into the presence of your superiors? Do you think I will overlook your impertinence as I did that scoundrel of a countryman's, on the score of ignorance?" "No, no!" cried the poor soldier, "forgive me, your two deers are safe; and the one just shot is"—The man said no more: the Major reeled for a moment like one about to faint, then throwing his purse at the poor soldier's head, gave three cheers, in which all present joined, so loudly and heartily, and with such unison, that the tumblers and decanters on the table chimed like the ringing of distant bells. Happiness was most singularly and unexpectedly restored to our little party, and the poor deer which had caused the only unwelcome interruption in our long social intercourse, apologized to our entire satisfaction, in the richest steaks and haunches that ever graced our table; and as we paid our devoirs to the delicious viands, there flashed the brightest wit, and passed the happiest hours, that ever blessed the old campaigners of the *Frontier Garrison.*

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THE MISSISSIPPI.

"I have been
Where the wild will of Mississippi's tide
Has dashed me on the sawyer."—BRAINERD.

THE North American continent, in its impenetrable forests, its fertile prairies, its magnificent lakes, its variety of rivers with their falls, is the richest portion of our globe. Many of these wonderful exhibitions of nature are already shrines where pilgrims from every land assemble to admire and marvel at the surpassing wonders of a new world. So numerous indeed are the objects presented, so novel and striking is their character, that the judgment is confused in endeavouring to decide which single one is worthy of the greatest admiration; and the forests, the prairies, the lakes, the rivers, and falls, each in turn dispute the supremacy. But to us, the Mississippi ranks first in importance; and thus we think must it strike all, when they consider the luxurious fertility of the valley through which it flows, its vast extent, and the charm of mystery that rests upon its waters. The Niagara Falls, with its fearful depths, its rocky heights, its thunder, and "bows of promise," addresses itself to the ear, and the eye, and through these alone impresses the be-

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holder with the greatness of its character. The Mississippi, on the contrary, although it may have few or no tangible demonstrations of power, although it has no language with which it can startle the senses, yet in a "still small voice" it addresses the mind, with its terrible lessons of strength and sublimity, more forcibly than any other object in nature.

The name MISSISSIPPI was derived from the aborigines of the country, and has been poetically rendered the "Father of Waters." There is little truth in this translation, and it gives no idea, or scarcely none, of the river itself. The literal meaning of the Indian compound Mississippi, as is the case with all Indian names in this country, would have been much better, and every way more characteristic. From the most numerous Indian tribe in the south-west we derive the name; and it would seem that the same people who gave the name to the Mississippi, at different times possessed nearly half the continent; judging from the fact that the Ohio in the north, and many of the most southern points of the peninsula of Florida, are from the Choctaw language. With that tribe the two simple adjectives, *Missah* and *Sippah*, are used when describing the most familiar things; but these two words, though they are employed thus familiarly when separated, when compounded, form the most characteristic name we can get of this wonderful river. Missah, literally *Old big*, Sippah, *strong*, OLD-BIG-STRONG; and this name is eminently appropriate to the Mississippi.

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The country through which this river flows is almost entirely alluvial. Not a stone is to be seen, save about its head-waters; but a dark rich earth that "looks eager for the hand of cultivation;" for vegetation lies piled upon its surface with a luxuriant wastefulness that beggars all description, and finds no comparison for its extent, except in the mighty river from which it receives its support. This alluvial soil forms frail banks to confine the swift current of the Mississippi; and, as might be imagined, they are continually altering their shape and location. The channel is capricious and wayward in its course. The needle of the compass turns round and round upon its axis, as it marks the bearings of your craft, and in a few hours will frequently point due north, west, east, and south, delineating those tremendous bends in the stream which nature seems to have formed to check the head-long current, and keep it from rushing too madly to the ocean. But the stream does not always tamely circumscribe these bends: gathering strength from resistance, it will form new and more direct channels; and thus it is that large tracts of country once on the river, become inland, or are entirely swept away by the current; and so frequently does this happen, that "cut-offs" are almost as familiar to the eye on the Mississippi as its muddy waters. When the Mississippi, in making its "cut-offs," is ploughing its way through the virgin soil, there float upon the top of this destroying tide thousands of trees, that covered the land, and lined its carving banks. These gigantic wrecks of the primitive forests are tossed

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about by the invisible power of the current, as if they were straws; and they find no rest, until with associated thousands they are thrown upon some projecting point of land, where they lie rotting for miles, their dark forms frequently shooting into the air like writhing serpents, presenting one of the most desolate pictures the mind can conceive.

These masses of timber are called "rafts." Other trees become attached to the bottom of the river, and yet by some elasticity of the roots they are loose enough to be affected by the strange and powerful current, which will bear them down under the surface; and the tree, by its own strength, will come gracefully up again, to be again engulfed; and thus they wave upward and downward with a gracefulness of motion which would not disgrace a beau of the old school. Boats frequently pass over these "sawyers," as they go down stream, pressing them under by their weight; but let some unfortunate child of the genius of Robert Fulton, as it passes up stream, be saluted by the visage of one of these polite gentry, as it rises ten or more feet in the air, and nothing short of irreparable damage, or swift destruction ensues, while the cause of all this disaster, after the concussion, will rise above the ruin as if nothing had happened, shake the dripping water from its forked limbs, and sink again, as if rejoicing in its strength. Other trees will fasten themselves firmly in the bottom of the river; and their long trunks, shorn of their limbs, present the most formidable objects to navigation. A rock itself, sharpened and set by art, could be no more dangerous

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than these dread "snags." Let the bows of the strongest vessel come in contact with them, and the concussion will drive through its timbers as if they were paper; and the noble craft will sometimes tremble for a moment like a thing of life, when suddenly struck to its vitals, and then sink into its grave.

Such are the "cut-offs," "rafts," "sawyers," and "snags" of the Mississippi; terms significant to the minds of the western boatman and hunter, of qualities which they apply to themselves and their heroes, whenever they wish to express themselves strongly, and we presume the beau ideal of a political character with them, would be one who would come at the truth by a "cut-off," separate and pile up falsehood for decay, like the trees of a "raft," and do all this with the politeness of a "sawyer," and with principles unyielding as a "snag."

The vast extent of the Mississippi is almost beyond belief. The stream which may bear you gently along in midwinter so far south that the sun is oppressive, finds its beginnings in a country of eternal snows. Follow it in your imagination thousands of miles, as you pass on from its head waters to its mouth, and you find it flowing through almost every climate under heaven: nay more, the comparatively small stream on which you look, receives within itself the waters of four rivers alone; Arkansas, Red, Ohio, and Missouri; whose united lengths, without including their tributaries, is over eight thousand miles: yet this mighty flood is swallowed up by the Mississippi, as if it possessed

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within itself the very capacity of the ocean, and disdained in its narrow limits to acknowledge the accession of strength.

The colour of this tremendous flood of water is always turbid. There seems no rest for it that will enable it to become quiet or clear. In all seasons, the same muddy water meets the eye; and this strange peculiarity, associated with the character and form of the banks, strikes the mind at once as the dark sediment which has for centuries settled upon the river's edge, and thus formed the "ridges" through which it runs; or in other words, it has *confined itself:* and in this we behold one of its most original features. On the Mississippi we have no land sloping down in gentle declivities, to the water's edge; but a bank just high enough, where it is washed by the river, to protect the back country from inundation, in the ordinary rises of the stream; for whenever, from an extensive flood, it rises above the top of this feeble barrier, the water runs down into the country. This singular fact shows how all the land on the Mississippi, south of the thirty-fourth degree of latitude, is liable to inundation, since nearly all the inhabitants on the shores of the river find its level, in ordinarily high water, running above the land on which they reside. To prevent this easy and apparently natural inundation, there seems to be a power constantly exerted to hold the flood in check, and bid it "go so far and no farther;" and but for this interposition of divine power, here so signally displayed, the fair fields of the south would become sandbars upon the shores of the

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Atlantic, and the country which might now support the world, would only bear the angry ocean wave. Suppose, for an instant, that a universal spring should beam upon our favoured continent, and that the thousands of streams which are tributary to the Mississippi were to become at once unloosed: the mighty flood in its rushing course would destroy the heart of the north-western continent. But mark the goodness and wisdom of Providence. Early in the spring, the waters of the Ohio rise with its tributaries, and the Mississippi bears them off, without injuriously overflowing its banks. When summer sets in, its own head-waters about the lakes, and the swift Missouri, with its melting ice from the Rocky Mountains, come down, and thus each, in order, makes the Mississippi its outlet to the Gulf of Mexico. But were all these streams permitted to come together in their strength, what, again we ask, would save the Eden gardens of the south?

In contemplations like these, carried out to their fullest extent, we may arrive at the character of this mighty river. *It is in the thoughts it suggests*, and not in the breadth or length, visible at any given point to the eye. Depending on the senses alone, we should never think of being astonished, or even feeling the least degree of admiration. You may float upon its bosom, and be lost amid its world of waters, and yet you will *see* nothing of its vastness; for the river has no striking beauty: its waves run scarce as high as a child can reach: upon its banks we find no towering precipices, no cloud-capped mountains. All, all is dull—I might say tame. But

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let us float day after day upon its apparently sluggish surface, and, by contemplation and comparison, once begin to comprehend its magnitude, and the mind is overwhelmed with fearful admiration. There seems to rise up from its muddy waters a spirit, robed in mystery, that points back for its beginning to the deluge, and whispers audibly: "I roll on, and on, and on, *altering*, but *not altered*, while time exists!" Here, too, we behold a power terrible in its loneliness; for on the Mississippi a sameness meets your eye everywhere, without a single change of scene. A river incomprehensible, illimitable, and mysterious, flows ever onward, tossing to and fro under its depths, in its own channel, as if fretting in its ordered limits; swallowing its banks here, and disgorging them elsewhere so suddenly, that the attentive pilot, as he repeats his frequent route, feels that he knows not where he is, and often hesitates fearfully along in the mighty flood by the certain lead; and again and again is he startled by the ominous cry, "Less fathom deep!" where but yesterday the lead would have in vain gone down for soundings. Such is the great Aorta of the continent of North America; alone and unequalled in its majesty; proclaiming in its course the wisdom and power of God, who only can measure its depths, and "turn them about as a very little thing."

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THE AMERICAN WILD-CAT.

In the southern portions of the United States, but especially in Louisiana, the wild-cat is found in abundance. The dense swamps that border on the Mississippi protect this vicious species of game from extermination, and foster their increase; and, although every year vast numbers are killed, they remain seemingly as plentiful as they ever were "in the memory of the oldest inhabitant." The wild-cat seeks the most solitary retreats in which to rear its young, where in some natural hole in the ground, or some hollow tree, it finds protection for itself and its kittens from the destructive hand of man. At night, or at early morn, it comes abroad, stealing over the dried leaves, in search of prey, as quietly as a zephyr, or ascending the forest tree with almost the ease of a bird. The nest on the tree and the burrow in the ground are alike invaded; while the poultry-yard of the farmer, and his sheepfold, are drawn on liberally to supply the cat with food. It hunts down the rabbit, coon, and possum, and springs from the elevated bough upon the bird perched beneath, catching it in its mouth—and will do this, while descending like an arrow in speed, and with the softness of a feather to the ground. Nothing can exceed its beauty of motion when in pursuit of game, or sporting in play. No leap seems too formidable; no at-

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titude is ungraceful. It runs, flies, leaps, skips, and is at ease in an instant of time; every hair of its body seems redolent with life.

Its disposition is untamable; it seems insensible to kindness; a mere mass of ill-nature, having no sympathies with any, not even of its own kind. It is for this reason, no doubt, that it is so recklessly pursued; its paw being, like the Ishmaelite's, against every man; and it most indubitably follows, that every man's dogs, sticks, and guns are against it. The hounds themselves, that hunt equally well the cat and the fox, pursue the former with a clamorous joy, and kill it with a zest that they do not display when finishing off a fine run after Reynard. In fact, as an animal of sport, the cat in many respects is preferable to the fox; its trail is always warmer, and it shows more sagacity in eluding its enemies.

In Louisiana the sportsman starts out in the morning, professedly for a fox-chase, and it turns out "cat," and often both cat and fox are killed, after a short but hard morning's work. The chase is varied, and is frequently full of amusing incident, for the cat, as might be expected, will take to the trees, to avoid pursuit, and this habit of the animal allows the sportsman to meet it on quite familiar terms. If the tree is a tall one, the excitable creature manages to have its face obscured by the distance; but if it takes to a dead limbless trunk, where the height will permit its head to be fairly seen as it looks down upon the pack that are yelling at its feet, with such open mouths, that they

"Fetch shrill echoes from the hollow earth,"

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you will see a rare exhibition of rage and fury; eyes that seem like living balls of fire, poisonous claws, that clutch the insensible wood with deep indentations; the foam trembles on its jaws; hair standing up like porcupine quills; ears pressed down to the head, forming as perfect a picture of vicious, ungovernable destructiveness as can be imagined. A charge of mustard-seed shot, or a poke with a stick when at bay, will cause it to desert its airy abode, and it no sooner touches the ground than it breaks off at a killing pace, the pack like mad fiends on its trail.

Besides "treeing," the cat will take advantage of some hole in the ground, and disappear, when it meets with these hiding-places, as suddenly as ghosts at cock-crowing. The hounds come up to the hiding-place, and a fight ensues. The first head intruded into the cat's hole is sure to meet with a warm reception. Claws and teeth do their work. Still the staunch hound heeds it not, and either he gets a hold himself, or acts as a bait to draw the cat from its burrow; thus fastened, the dog, being the most powerful in strength, backs out, dragging his enemy along with him; and no sooner is the cat's head seen by the rest of the pack, than they pounce upon him, and in a few moments the "nine lives" of the "varmint" are literally *chawed-up*.

At one of these burrowings, a huge cat intruded into a hole so small that an ordinarily large hound could not follow. A little stunted but excellent dog, rejoicing in the name of Ringwood, from his diminutiveness succeeded in forcing his way into the hole

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after the cat; in an instant a faint scream was heard, and the little fellow showed symptoms of having caught a tartar. One of the party present stooped down, and running his arm under the dog's body, pressed it forward, until he could feel that the cat had the dog firmly clawed by each shoulder, with his nose in the cat's mouth; in this situation, by pressing the dog firmly under the chest, the two were drawn from the hole. The cat hung on until he discovered that his victim was surrounded by numerous friends, when he let go his cruel hold, the more vigorously to defend himself. Ringwood, though covered with jetting blood, jumped upon the cat and shook away as if unharmed in the contest.

Sportsmen, in hunting the cat, provide themselves generally with pistols—not for the purpose of killing the cat, but to annoy it, so that it will desert from the tree, when it has taken to one. Sometimes these infantile shooting-irons are left at home, and the cat gets safely out of the reach of sticks, or whatever other missile may be convenient. This is a most provoking affair; dogs and sportsmen loose all patience, and as no expedient suggests itself, the cat escapes for the time. I once knew of a cat thus perched out of reach, that was brought to terms in a very singular manner. The tree on which the animal was lodged being a very high one, secure from all interruption, it looked down upon its pursuers with the most provoking complacency; every effort to dislodge it had failed, and the hunt was about to be abandoned in despair, when one of the sportsmen discovered a grape-vine that passed directly over the cat's body,

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and by running his eyes along its circumvolutions, traced it down to the ground; a judicious jerk at the vine touched the cat on the rump; this was most unexpected, and it instantly leaped to the ground from a height of over forty feet, striking on its forepaws, throwing a sort of rough somerset, and then starting ing off as sound in limb and wind as if he had leaped off a "huckleberry" bush.

The hunter of the wild turkey, while "calling," in imitation of the hen, to allure the gobler within reach of his rifle, will sometimes be annoyed by the appearance of the wild-cat stealing up to the place from whence the sounds proceed. The greatest caution on such occasions is visible; the cat advancing by the slowest possible movements, stealing along like a serpent. The hunter knows that the intruder has spoiled his turkey sport for the morning, and his only revenge is to wait patiently and give the cat the contents of his gun, then minus all game, he goes home anathematizing the whole race of cats for thus interfering with his sport and his dinner.

Of all the peculiarities of the cat, its untamable and quarrelsome disposition is its most marked characteristic. The western hunter, when he wishes to cap the climax of braggadocio, with respect to his own prowess, says, "he can whip his weight in wild cats." This is saying all that can be said, for it would seem, considering its size, that the cat in a fight can bite fiercer, scratch harder, and live longer than any other animal whatever. "I am a roaring earthquake in a fight," sung out one of the half-horse, half-alligator species of fellows, "a real snorter of

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the universe. I can strike as hard as fourth proof lightning, and keep it up, rough and tumble, as long as a wild-cat." These high encomiums on the character of the pugnacity of the cat are beyond question. A "singed cat" is an excellent proverb, illustrating that a person may be smarter than he looks. A *singed wild-cat*, as such an illustration, would be sublime. There is no half-way mark, no exception, no occasional moment of good nature; starvation and a surfeit, blows and kind words, kicks, cuffs, and fresh meat, reach not the sympathies of the wild cat. He has the greediness of a pawnbroker, the ill nature of a usurer, the meanness of a pettifogging lawyer, the blind rage of the hog, and the apparent insensibility to pain of the turtle: like a woman, the wild-cat is incomparable with any thing but itself. In expression of face, the wild-cat singularly resembles the rattlesnake. The skulls of these two "varmints" have the same venomous expression, the same demonstration of fangs; and probably no two creatures living attack each other with more deadly ferocity and hate. They will stare at each other with eyes filled with defiance, and burning with fire; one hissing, and the other snarling, presenting a most terrible picture of the malevolence of passion. The serpent in his attitudes is all grace—the cat all activity. The serpent moves with the quickness of lightning while making the attack; the cat defends with motions equally quick, bounding from side to side, striking with its paws—both are often victims, for they seldom separate until death-blows have been inflicted on either side. The Indians, who, in their notions and tradi-

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tions, are always picturesque and beautiful, imagine that the rattlesnake, to live, must breathe the poisonous air of the swamps, and the exhalations of decayed animal matter; while the cat has the attribute of gloating over the meaner displays of evil passions of a quarrelsome person; for speaking of a quarrelsome family, they say, "the lodge containing them *fattens the wild-cat.*"

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TOM OWEN, THE BEE-HUNTER.

As a country becomes cleared up and settled bee-hunters disappear, consequently they are seldom or ever noticed. Among this backwoods fraternity have flourished men of genius in their way, who have died unwept and unnoticed, while the heroes of the turf and of the chase have been lauded to the skies for every trivial superiority they have displayed in their respective pursuits. To chronicle the exploits of sportsmen is commendable: the custom began as early as the days of the antediluvians, for we read that "Nimrod was a mighty hunter before the Lord." Familiar, however, as Nimrod's name may be, or even Davy Crockett's, what does it amount to, when we reflect that Tom Owen, the bee-hunter, is comparatively unknown?

Yes, the mighty Tom Owen has "hunted" from the time he could stand alone until the present time, and not a pen has inked paper to record his exploits. "Solitary and alone" has he traced his game through

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the mazy labyrinth of air, marked, I hunted, I found, I conquered, upon the carcasses of his victims, and then marched homeward with his spoils, quietly and satisfiedly sweetening his path through life, and by its very obscurity adding the principal element of the sublime.

It was on a beautiful southern October morning, at the hospitable mansion of a friend, where I was staying to drown dull care, that I first had the pleasure of seeing Tom Owen. He was straggling on this occasion up the rising ground that led to the hospitable mansion of mine host, and the difference between him and ordinary men was visible at a glance; perhaps it showed itself as much in the perfect contempt of fashion he displayed in the adornment of his outward man, as it did in the more elevated qualities of his mind that were visible in his face. His head was adorned with an outlandish pattern of a hat—his nether limbs were ensconced in a pair of inexpressibles, beautifully fringed by the brier-bushes through which they were often drawn; coats and vests he considered as superfluities; and hanging upon his back were a couple of pails, and an axe in his right hand formed the varieties that represented the corpus of Tom Owen. As is usual with great men he had his followers, and with a courtier-like humility they depended upon the expression of his face for all their hopes of success. The usual salutations of meeting were sufficient to draw me within the circle of his influence, and I at once became one of his most ready followers. "See yonder!" said Tom, stretching his long arm into in-

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finite space, "see yonder—there's a bee." We all looked in the direction he pointed, but that was the extent of our observation. "It was a fine bee," continued Tom, "black body, yellow legs, and into that tree,"—pointing to a towering oak, blue in the distance. "In a clear day I can see a bee over a mile, easy!" When did Coleridge "talk" like that? And yet Tom Owen uttered such a saying with perfect ease.

After a variety of meanderings through the thick woods, and clambering over fences, we came to our place of destination as pointed out by Tom, who selected a mighty tree whose trunk contained the sweets, the possession of which the poets have likened to other sweets that leave a sting behind. The felling of a mighty tree is a sight that calls up a variety of emotions; and Tom's game was lodged in one of the finest in the forest. But "the axe was laid at the root of the tree," which, in Tom's mind, was made expressly for bees to build their nests in, that he might cut them down, and obtain possession thereof. The sharp sounds of the axe as it played in the hands of Tom, and was replied to by a stout negro from the opposite side, by the rapidity of their strokes fast gained upon the heart of the lordly sacrifice. There was little poetry in the thought, that long before this mighty empire of states was formed, Tom Owen's "bee-hive" had stretched its brawny arms to the winter's blast, and grown green in the summer's sun. Yet such was the case, and how long I might have moralized I know not, had not the enraged buzzing about my ears satisfied me that the

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occupants of the tree were not going to give up their home and treasure without showing considerable practical fight. No sooner had the little insects satisfied themselves that they were about to be invaded, than they began one after another to descend from their airy abode and fiercely pitch into our faces; anon a small company, headed by an old veteran, would charge with its entire force upon all parts of our body at once. It need not be said that the better part of valour was displayed by a precipitate retreat from such attacks.

In the midst of this warfare, the tree began to tremble with the fast-repeated strokes of the axe, and then might have been seen a bee-hive of stingers precipitating themselves from above on the unfortunate hunter beneath. Now it was that Tom shone forth in his glory.

His partisans, like many hangers-on about great men, began to desert him on the first symptoms of danger; and when the trouble thickened, they, one and all, took to their heels, and left only our hero and Sambo to fight their adversaries. Sambo, however, soon dropped his axe, and fell into all kinds of contortions; first he would seize the back of his neck with his hands, then his shins, and yell with pain. "Don't holler, nigger, till you get out of the woods," said the sublime Tom, consolingly; but writhe he did, until he broke and left Tom "alone in his glory."

Cut-thwack! sounded through the confused hum at the foot of the tree, marvellously reminding me of the interruptions that occasionally broke in upon the

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otherwise monotonous hours of my school-boy days. A sharp cracking finally told me the chopping was done, and looking aloft, I saw the mighty tree balancing in the air. Slowly and majestically it bowed for the first time towards its mother earth, gaining velocity as it descended, shivering the trees that interrupted its downward course, and falling with thundering sound, splintering its mighty limbs and burying them deeply in the ground.

The sun, for the first time in at least two centuries, broke uninterruptedly through the chasm made in the forest, and shone with splendour upon the magnificent Tom standing a conqueror among his spoils.

As might be expected, the bees were very much astonished and confused, and by their united voices they proclaimed death, had it been in their power, to all their foes, not, of course, excepting Tom Owen himself. But the wary hunter was up to the tricks of this trade, and, like a politician, he knew how easily an enraged mob could be quelled with smoke; and smoke he tried until his enemies were completely destroyed. We, Tom's hangers-on, now approached his treasure. It was a rich one, and as he observed, "contained a rich chance of plunder." Nine feet, by measurement, of the hollow of the tree was full, and this afforded many pails of pure honey. Tom was liberal, and supplied us all with more than we wanted, and "toted," by the assistance of Sambo, his share to his own home, soon to be devoured, and replaced by the destruction of another tree and another nation of bees.

Thus Tom exhibited within himself an unconquer-

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able genius which would have immortalized him, had he directed it in following the sports of Long Island or New-Market.

We have seen Colonel Bingaman, the Napoleon of the southern turf, glorying amid the victories of his favourite sport,—we have heard the great Crockett detail the soul-stirring adventures of a bear-hunt—we have listened, with almost suffocating interest, to the tale of a Nantucket seaman, while he portrayed the death of the mighty whale—and we have also seen Tom Owen triumphantly engaged in a bee-hunt—we beheld and wondered at the sports of the turf, the field, and the sea, because the objects acted on by man were terrible, indeed, when their instincts were aroused. But in the bee-hunt Tom Owen and its consummation, the grandeur *visible* was imparted by the mighty mind of Tom Owen himself.

THE END.

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